

Agricultural Operation Practices Act

Technical Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

1. BACKGROUND

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) and the Ministry responsible for agriculture (AGRIC) are partners in regulating the confined feeding industry. AGRIC is responsible for the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA). The NRCB is responsible for delivery of the act, including reviewing and issuing decisions on applications, enforcement and compliance.

The establishment of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was recommended to identify and prioritize issues for which there is a need for a technical guideline. Technical guidelines are documents that provide further clarification and direction to NRCB staff and the stakeholders on practical and technical aspects of implementing AOPA and its regulations. Technical guidelines are required to:

- help clarify the AOPA objectives,
- build a common understanding and clarity for stakeholders,
- improve stakeholder understanding of AOPA requirements and
- clarify how NRCB staff apply aspects of AOPA where discretion is involved.

Establishment of a TAG to focus on development of technical guidelines relating to AOPA is consistent with recommendations in the December 22, 2005 AOPA Implementation Report that outlines the basis for achieving an improved delivery of the AOPA.

2. MANDATE

The mandate of the TAG is to manage the development of technical guidelines to clarify AOPA objectives. This is accomplished by:

- Soliciting input on guideline needs.
- Prioritizing technical guideline requirements.
- Assembling teams as required to develop the technical guidelines.
- Provide regular updates to the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) co-chairs.
- Working with staff from both AGRIC and NRCB to ensure technical guidelines are appropriately extended.
- Assessing guidelines to ensure desired outcomes are met.

The TAG process may also identify issues that cannot be appropriately addressed through the development of technical guidelines process (e.g. an AOPA amendment be required). The TAG will be responsible for communicating these issues to AGRIC and NRCB senior management for consideration in AOPA amendment discussions.

3. COMPOSITION

The TAG is accountable to the AGRIC Natural Resource Management Branch Executive Director and the CEO of the NRCB. The Assistant Deputy Minister of the Primary Agriculture Division is the ex-officio chair of the TAG. The co-chairs will be representatives from AGRIC and the NRCB. Membership, beyond the co-chairs, on TAG consists of:

- AGRIC – 2 members
- NRCB – 2 members
- Industry – 2 members

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP

The members of the TAG are expected to be committed to the development and maintenance of guidelines that support a confined feeding industry in Alberta that is both environmentally and economically sustainable. In addition, members should:

- Gather information and viewpoints, making such available in a timely way; bring forward the broad views of those they represent.
- Strive towards workable solutions and advancing the clarity of AOPA.
- Respect the information and viewpoints of other members of the TAG.
- Review and provide timely comment/upgrades to draft technical documents.
- Seek consensus on issues and recommendations. In the instance where consensus is not reached and to ensure progress, the TAG co-chairs will consult with the CEO of the NRCB and AGRIC's Natural Resource Management Branch Executive Director. If consensus is still not reached, the ADM of Primary Agriculture Division, as the ex-officio chair of the TAG, will provide guidance and make decisions as required.
- Commit technical resources required for preparation of guidelines.
- Provide extension support towards the application of guidelines.
- Support the TAG process by promoting its mandate.

5. OPERATIONS OF TAG

The co-chairs will provide regular updates to PAG and seek advice as required on guideline requirements.

The TAG will establish Working Teams, as required, to work on priority guidelines. Working Team membership will vary according to expertise requirements. In most cases it is expected that AGRIC and NRCB staff and perhaps technical representative from industry will be involved; however, in cases where outside expertise is required, consultants and/or university staff could be retained.

Project charters will be developed at the onset of the guideline development to ensure the objectives, responsibilities, timelines and deliverables are clear. The Working Team would be required to provide regular progress updates to the TAG and the Team lead will be expected to present key findings to PAG.

TAG will provide completed guidelines to the NRCB. In order for TAG to remain accountable for these completed guidelines, changes and edits to the guidelines must occur within the TAG process.

6. TIMEFRAME

It is anticipated the TAG would meet on a quarterly basis at the call of the co- chairs. Meeting frequency will be reviewed and decided on by the co-chairs. Meetings of technical working teams would be the responsibility of the Team Lead and would be scheduled as necessary to ensure timely completion of guidelines.

7. MEETING LOCATION

All TAG meetings will be conducted in person in Airdrie, unless TAG co-chairs determine the meeting can be held virtually.