



March 8, 2013

Dear O.A.A.S Member,

As you may know, the O.A.A.S. has successfully secured funding to conduct a Biosecurity Project in Ontario's Agricultural Fair community.

The project will be led by the O.A.A.S. and Canadian Agri- Services Incorporated, a consulting company with long experience in agricultural biosecurity. The project will examine the Fairs' existing biosecurity procedures and prepare information and materials that will help Ontario Ag-Societies implement biosecurity practices that will enhance the on-site experience for their Fair exhibitors and attendees.

"Biosecurity" is a term used to describe practices that reduce the risk of transfer of disease organisms among animals, and also between animals and humans. In recent years, livestock farmers have become more concerned about disease risks in their flocks and herds, and there have also been several reports of people, particularly children, being infected by close contact with animals at fairs and petting zoos.

Three focus groups will be held as part of the first phase of the project. As an interested stakeholder, we invite you to participate in one of the focus groups to discuss the types of biosecurity practices that may currently exist and what information is being captured and shared at your fair and other fairs around the province.

As we are un-sure of the level of attendance at each of the locations, please R.S.V.P. to register to attend one of the three focus groups on a first come first served basis. Should you be unable to attend, we still seek your input and feedback via a brief questionnaire that will be distributed to each Ag-Society.

The focus groups will provide you with an opportunity to share your views and your expertise on:

- Any current biosecurity practices and information-sharing procedures at Ontario's Fairs;
- How to improve the effectiveness and maximize biosecurity systems operating in Ontario's Fairs; and

- The potential benefits of such changes in terms of enhanced biosecurity and reduced risks of disease transfer at Ontario's Fairs.

Focus group attendees will learn about existing biosecurity programs, factors that impact their effectiveness and how they have benefited the participants. Focus group participants will also benefit from hearing the perspectives of other industry stakeholders and be given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions.

Please join us at one of the following sessions. Each meeting will run from **10:00am – 2:00pm**, and **lunch will be served**.

#### **LOCATIONS:**

Wednesday March 27, 2013: **Paris**

Paris Fair Grounds, 139 Silver Street, Paris, ON

<https://maps.google.ca/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en>

Tuesday April 9, 2013: **Thorndale**

Thorndale Community Centre 255 Upper Queen Street Thorndale, ON

<http://maps.google.ca/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=wl>

Tuesday April 16, 2013: **Port Hope**

Port Hope Town Park Recreation Centre, 62 McCaul Street Port Hope, ON

<http://maps.google.ca/maps?ie=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=wl>

Please register by emailing [oaas@bellnet.ca](mailto:oaas@bellnet.ca) ; by Friday, March 22nd, 2013.

Should you have any questions about the project or the focus groups, please feel free to contact me at:

[gm@ontariofairs.com](mailto:gm@ontariofairs.com) or (519) 287-3553

Or

Chris Vanderkooy at [cvanderkooy@cagsi.ca](mailto:cvanderkooy@cagsi.ca) or (519) 546-3017

We truly appreciate the unique perspective that you will provide as representatives of your fair. Your input and knowledge is invaluable as we bring together an accurate insight into current

biosecurity practices and enable Ontario's fairs to develop, implement and utilize biosecurity systems more effectively.

We look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

*Mark*

Mark Beaven

General Manager  
Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies