Ontario Livestock & Poultry Council

Newsletter

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OLPC Board Elections
OLPC held its annual meeting on June 12, 2026. Klaus Schneeberger was acclaimed as Chair. The Vice Chair will be elected by the Board at their July meeting.

Terms Expires 2027
Major Livestock – Thomas Brandstetter, Beef Farmers of Ontario
Poultry – Gbenga Alade, Chicken Farmers
Veterinarian Associations – Josh Crossland, OVMA

Term Expires 2028
Minor Livestock – Erin Morgan, Ontario Sheep Farmers
Individual Agri-Business – Harlan Martin, Norwell Dairy
Agriculture and Food Associations and Coalitions – Danille Dunn, OABA

OLPC 2026 Membership Meetings
In-person meetings will be at Beef Farmers of Ontario, 130 Malcolm Road, Guelph.

- August 14, 2026
- October 16, 2026 – in person
- December 11, 2026

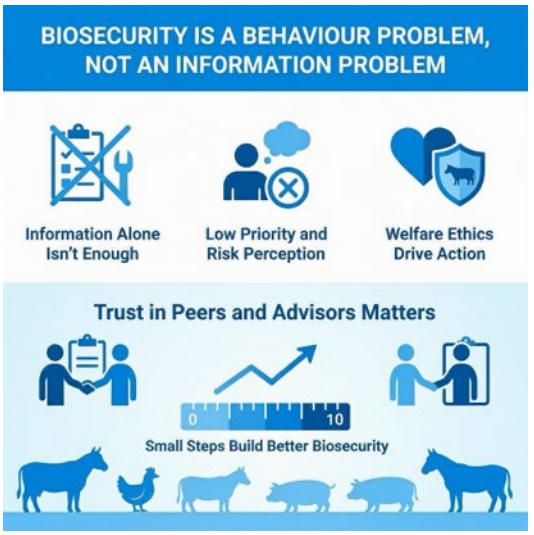
Agriculture Related Calls to Animal Welfare Services
During the first quarter of 2026, the overall number of calls to AWS was higher as compared to last year but the number related to livestock was lower. Below is a year-over-year comparison.

Species	Q1 2026	Q1 2025
Cattle	43	46
Horse/Donkey/Mule	109	169
Poultry	28	42
Sheep	10	24
Swine	11	15
Goats	14	40
Total	**215**	**336**

Why Aren't People Doing What They're Supposed to Do? — Biosecurity Barriers

At the June OLPC meeting, members heard a presentation by Kelsey Spence, Assistant Professor, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph. Her research focuses on infectious disease prevention, biosecurity practices, and the socio-cultural factors that shape how people care for animals.

Despite decades of guidance and tools, biosecurity uptake across livestock and poultry sectors remains stubbornly low. Research shows the issue isn't a lack of information, it's human behaviour.



Producers cite barriers such as limited facilities, cost, and time, but these don't explain the full picture. In one survey of horse owners, 82% said biosecurity simply wasn't a priority, even when resources weren't a constraint. Risk is also routinely underestimated; when disease feels unlikely, motivation to act collapses.

What does drive compliance is clear. A strong moral obligation to animal welfare is the most consistent motivator, with 95% of owners feeling a duty to protect their animals. Trust also matters. Producers respond best to credible peers and advisors who demonstrate expertise, honesty, and genuine concern.

Turning insight into action requires both policy direction and hands-on engagement. Bottom-up approaches, e.g., working directly with farmers, build stronger buy-in. One practical tool is the importance ruler. Ask producers to rate the importance of biosecurity from 0–10. Then explore what it would take to move up one point and ask what small action they could take tomorrow. This shifts the conversation from abstract ideals to achievable steps.

Ultimately, the strongest levers are welfare ethics and trust. Messaging that emphasizes benefits to animal health, delivered by credible and trusted voices, is far more effective than technical instructions alone.

Exploring the link between HPAI and Wildlife

A research project conducted by Wren Conner, MSc student at Carleton University, is shedding light on how wild birds and mammals interact with commercial turkey farms in southern Ontario and what those patterns may mean for understanding the ecology of avian H5Nx viruses, including H5N1. Wren presented her results to date at the April OLPC members' meeting.

Wren's research focuses on three key questions comparing infected versus non-infected sites:
1. How do bird and mammal community composition differ?
2. What is the occurrence of avian H5Nx vector species?
3. How do the ways wild birds and mammals interact with premises differ?

Tick Factsheet
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System (CAHSS) have produced a visual guide of ticks native and non-native to Canada (PDF)

Rabies Numbers in Canada for 2026
During the first five months of 2026, there have been 879 samples submitted for rabies testing from across Canada. Nationally, 79 samples tested positive, which is only slightly higher than the same period last year (63 positives). Ontario accounted for 482 samples of which 9 tested positive (17 in same period last year). Quebec has seen an outbreak of raccoon rabies. Of the 55 positive raccoon samples, 54 were from Quebec and one from New Brunswick. The breakdown from which species the positive samples were taken are as follows:

	Can.	Ont.
Arctic fox	2	0
Bat	18	9
Dog	2	0
Raccoon	55	0
Red Fox	1	0
Skunk	1	0
Total	**79**	**9**

OLPC Biosecurity Resources
Over the years, OLPC has produced several biosecurity resources including signs, manuals, posters, videos, and more. Electronic versions of the print material are available on the website at https://www.ontlpc.com/resources.html

We still have a few biosecurity stop signs in stock. They can be ordered by downloading an order form from https://www.ontlpc.com/resources.html, calling the office 519-787-4322, or emailing Susan Fitzgerald at

Conducted across 30 turkey farms during the spring and fall of 2024, the study compared wildlife communities and behaviours at 12 farms previously infected with H5N1 (2022–2024) and 18 farms with no history of infection. No farm experienced more than one outbreak.

Key Findings
1. Bird communities were similar across all farms
Despite expectations that infected premises (IPs) might attract more wild birds or more high-risk species, the study found no significant difference in the number of birds observed and no significant difference in bird species richness. This suggests that bird presence alone does not explain why some farms experienced H5N1 outbreaks while others did not.

2. Infected farms hosted more mammalian species
One of the clearest distinctions between farm types was in mammal diversity. Infected premises had a significantly higher average number of wild mammal species compared to non-infected farms. This raises important questions about the role of mammals including scavengers and small carnivores in virus movement or environmental contamination.

3. Scavenging behaviour was more common at infected farms
Scavenging activity appeared more frequent at infected premises. Although the association did not reach statistical significance, the trend was notable.

Understanding how wildlife interacts with barns, feed, carcasses, and infrastructure could be as important as tracking which species are present. As the project continues, these insights may help refine biosecurity strategies, particularly those aimed at reducing wildlife access to vulnerable areas of poultry operations.

Landscape Variables Associated with IPs and non-IPs in Southern Ontario

Also during the April OLPC meeting, members heard a presentation on a study by Amélie Boutin, MSc student at Carleton University. The project is helping clarify whether the landscapes surrounding poultry farms influence the likelihood of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks in southern Ontario. Using federal outbreak data and spatial analysis tools, Boutin examined how features such as wildlife corridors, water bird habitat, and agricultural land cover differ between infected premises (IPs) and non-infected premises (non-IPs).

Amélie's research objectives are to:
- Consider how landscape features impact the spread of HPAI.
- Map and compare landscape features around infected and non-infected commercial poultry farms in southern Ontario.
- Identify whether wildlife corridors, water bird habitat and agricultural land cover contribute to outbreak risk.

She compared each site's surrounding landscape composition and configuration. Analyses were conducted at multiple spatial scales, including a 500 metre, two km, and 10-km radius, to capture broader ecological patterns.

Key Findings
1. Wildlife corridors showed no difference between infected and non-infected farms
Contrary to expectations, the presence or density of wildlife corridors, natural pathways that facilitate animal movement, did not differ between IPs and non-IPs. This suggests that corridor connectivity alone is unlikely to explain outbreak patterns.

2. Water bird habitat was not significantly different
Because waterfowl are major reservoirs of H5Nx viruses, Boutin examined whether infected farms were located closer to wetlands or water bird habitat. However, there was no significant difference between infected and control sites.

3. Infected farms had less agricultural land cover but not significantly different
At the 10-km scale, infected farms were surrounded by significantly less agricultural land cover than non-infected farms. However, the effect size was small, and no meaningful biological interpretation could be drawn from this pattern. The two km landscape context may play more of a role in shaping outbreak risk specifically forest cover and wetlands.

susan.tfio@bell.net. The stop signs are $20.00 + HST per sign.

We also have the biosecurity videos on DVD. The videos work well for training nonagricultural staff and for 4-H or school groups. There is no charge for the videos. Contact the OLPC office to request a copy. The videos can also be viewed at https://www.ontlpc.com/videos.html

Boutin's findings indicate that broad landscape features may not be strong predictors of HPAI infection risk for poultry farms in southern Ontario. Specifically:

- Wildlife movement pathways do not appear to differ between infected and non-infected farms.
- Proximity to water bird habitat does not distinguish outbreak sites.
- Agricultural land cover differences, while statistically detectable, do not translate into a clear ecological mechanism.

Ontario Vector-Borne Disease Tool

View provincial-level most recent week and year-to-date case counts for all reportable vector-borne diseases, including West Nile virus illness, Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan virus infection click here

West Nile Virus	0 Cases - Most Recent Week	0 Cases - YTD
Lyme Disease	10 Cases - Most Recent Week	296 Cases - YTD
Anaplasmosis	0 Cases - Most Recent Week	25 Cases - YTD
Babesiosis	0 Cases - Most Recent Week	0 Cases - YTD
Powassan Virus Disease	0 Cases - Most Recent Week	0 Cases - YTD

Most Recent Week: Week 23 (June 8 - June 14, 2026); YTD: Up to end of Week 23 (January 1 - June 14, 2026)

Our Mission

Provide a forum to facilitate the development and coordination of an Ontario strategy to deal with foreign animal disease and other transmissible livestock and poultry diseases.