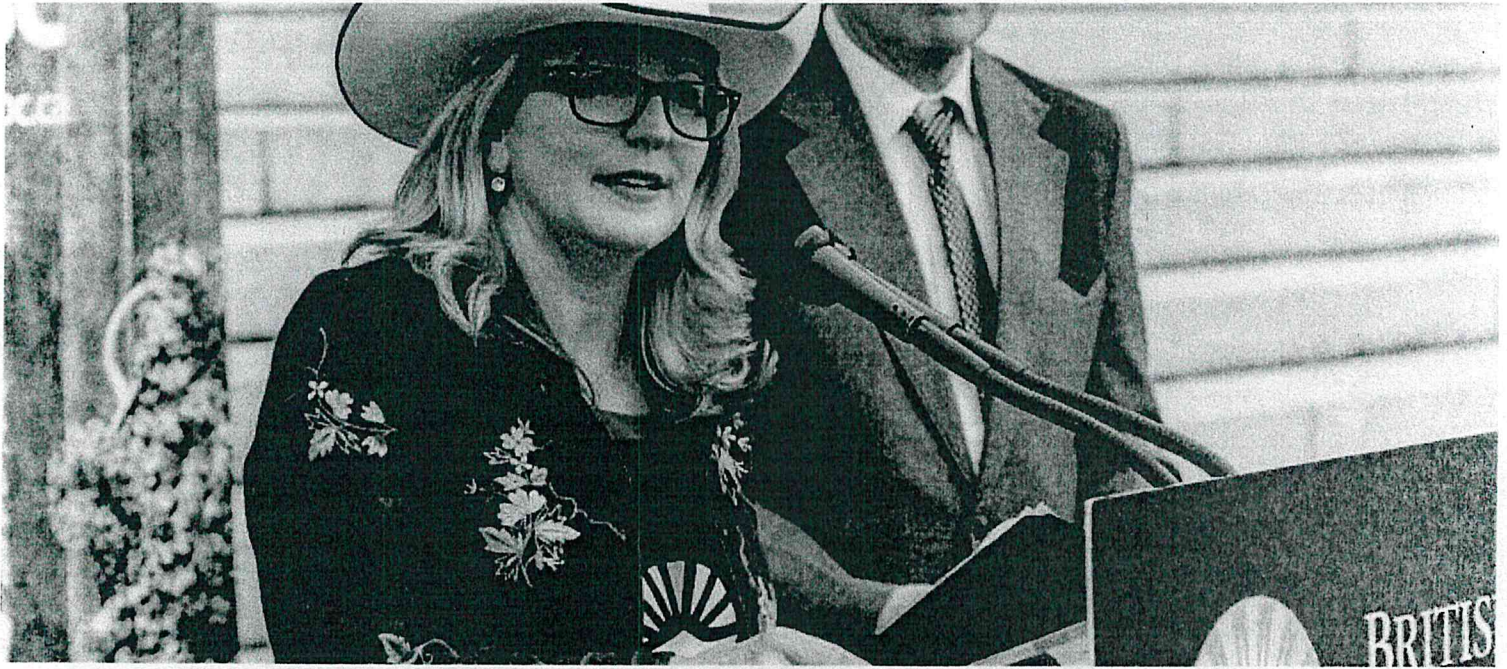


COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

Province announces wildfire recovery funds



BC Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham / BCMAFF photo

SEPTEMBER 8, 2021

by Kate Ayers

With close to 870,000 hectares burned across BC this year to date, the province has announced \$20 million in financial assistance for ranchers and farmers hit by drought and wildfire.

"This year's drought and fires have been incredibly difficult for many BC ranchers and farmers," BC agriculture minister Lana Popham said in a statement announcing the funding, noting that the BC government is ready "to help them keep their livelihoods and the province's food security and economy moving forward."

But the September 3 announcement came nearly three weeks after Ottawa boosted the federal share of the program to \$500 million and marked the smallest aid package among the four western provinces. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba had their programs ready in early August, anteing \$322 million matched by \$482.5 million from Ottawa.

The program in BC sees the province stake \$8 million and the federal government \$12 million towards relief efforts.

BC ranchers can access the 2021 Canada-British Columbia Wildfire and Drought AgriRecovery Initiative to cover costs of reseeding forages and replacing fencing or other uninsurable infrastructure that were destroyed in fires, the province says.

Similar to the province's \$20 million response package in 2017, this year's relief fund will cover up to 70% of transportation costs to ensure livestock have feed and water, up to \$80 per head to re-establish safe winter-feeding facilities and general fire clean up and up to 70% of the market value of breeding animals that perished in wildfires.

New this year, the framework includes funds for beekeepers to cover up to 70% of replacement costs for apiaries and equipment lost in wildfires.

The program does not cover fruit and vegetable growers.

COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

Ranchers watching bluetongue outbreak



File

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

by Peter Mitham And Barbara Johnstone Grimmer

An outbreak of bluetongue among bighorn sheep in the Grand Forks area has livestock producers on watch.

There have been 12 possible cases identified, though lab testing is still in progress. Several white-tailed deer in Washington have also contracted the disease.

The virus that causes the disease is spread by biting midges (also known as “no-see-ums”), which are only found in the southern Interior. There is no Bluetongue vaccine licensed in Canada, and no treatment.

Sheep are most susceptible, with a high mortality rate, but all ruminants are at risk. Most cases of the disease show no symptoms other than weight loss, milk loss and fertility losses. However, sheep may exhibit excessive salivation, panting, swollen tongue or ears and muzzle ulcers.

While the disease is a larger issue for sheep producers than cattle producers, BC Cattlemen’s Association general manager Kevin Boon has told local ranchers to be vigilant.

“This outbreak is earlier in the season than normal likely due to abnormally warm temperatures this summer,” says Boon. “The only control right now is basically insect control and most are doing what they can do to help themselves.”

Keeping animals inside when midges are most active may decrease transmission. Veterinarians recommend newer topical fly products such as Saber and Boss, which can minimize bites for up to four months.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency staff are aware of the outbreak, which is a reportable disease. CFIA is genotyping the outbreak to better understand it and clarify the risk to domestic livestock.