



Council of Canadian Academies  
Conseil des académies canadiennes

# Media Backgrounder

## *Healthy Animals, Healthy Canada*

### The Report of the Expert Panel on Approaches to Animal Health Risk Assessment

In 2009, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on behalf of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) asked the Council of Canadian Academies to assemble an Expert Panel to assess *the state and comprehensiveness of risk assessment techniques in animal health science, specifically pertaining to risks which may impact human health*.

The Council assembled a 12 member multidisciplinary expert panel. The Expert Panel on Approaches to Animal Health Risk Assessment was chaired by Dr. Alastair Cribb, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary.

The Panel examined risk assessments conducted by the CFIA, the Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as other organizations. It also conducted surveys to examine knowledge capacity in Canada. Lastly, the Panel heard expert testimony from representatives with government, industry and academia.

The Expert Panel's report provides evidence-based information to support CFIA and other risk assessment organizations as they consider future risk assessment policies and practices. It is important to note, this assessment is not a review of CFIA, its programs or policies related to risk assessment.

After examining the available evidence, the Council's Expert Panel concluded that animal health risk assessment can add increased value for decision-making when an *Integrated Multidimensional Approach* (IMDA) is used.

**Integrated** refers to the consideration of a wide range of consequences, specifically those that address animal health, human health and the environment. Currently risk assessment practices only examine the likelihood of a risk occurring and how serious the direct consequences are. Therefore a **Multidimensional** approach refers to moving beyond the recognition of the signs and hazards of a potential animal health event, to considering a full range of direct (e.g. trade losses) and indirect consequences (e.g. economic impacts on local communities), and towards fully documenting and assessing management decisions for the future.

The Panel found that effective implementation of an Integrated Multidimensional Approach requires:

1. Strengthening expertise and knowledge capacity in the area of animal health risk assessment.
2. Considering a broader range of consequences during the risk assessment process.
3. Improving communication among risk assessors, managers and stakeholders.
4. Implementing a structured system for prioritization of risk assessments to allow for the completion of day-to-day assessments as well as effective planning for future needs through foresight assessments.
5. Enhancing transparency to better understand and document how risk management decisions are made.
6. Incorporating methodologies and perspectives from various disciplines to provide broader input and analysis.

For more information, or to download a free copy of the report in English or French please visit [www.scienceadvice.ca/en/animal-health.aspx](http://www.scienceadvice.ca/en/animal-health.aspx).