

The Honourable Heath MacDonald  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
1341 Baseline Road  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5

February 12, 2026

Sent via email: aafc.minister-ministre.aac@agr.gc.ca

**Re: Concern over closures of AAFC Research Stations**

The Canadian Veal Association (CVA) is writing to express serious concern regarding the announced closures of three Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research and development centres and four satellite research farms. Of particular concern is the proposed closure of the Lacombe Research and Development Centre in Alberta and its integrated meat science laboratory, which plays a critical role in livestock and meat research in Canada.

The CVA has worked closely and productively with Dr. Oscar Lopez and his team at the Lacombe Research Centre through the Livestock Carcass Merit and Market Competitiveness Program. This collaboration has delivered tangible results for Canadian producers. In 2019, research and quality testing conducted through this program directly supported the CVA's successful amendment to the Canada Beef Grading Agency's Carcass Grade Requirements Document, enabling an increase in allowable veal carcass weight. This change improved producer competitiveness while maintaining the quality attributes demanded by consumers.

Additionally, the strategic role and value of Dr. Oscar Lopez and his team was clearly demonstrated through their work on the development of an innovative veal carcass grading system. This project made it possible, for the first time, to demonstrate that veal carcass quality can be evaluated objectively, accurately, and reproducibly, particularly through the development of a grading ruler adapted to grain-fed veal.

The work carried out by Dr. Lopez was successfully completed thanks to his technical knowledge and expertise, which are unique in Canada. The project entered its final phase in 2025 and must continue in 2026 in order to achieve implementation within the industry. The loss of this expertise would directly compromise the continuation of progress, the competitiveness of the sector, and its ability to meet market requirements.

Furthermore, at the time of the closure announcement, the CVA was actively engaged with Dr. Lopez on the development of a new research project examining veal carcass traits across a range of carcass weights, cattle breeds, and sex. Given the significant changes underway in veal and dairy production systems, this research is essential to ensuring that Canadian veal continues to

meet consumer expectations with respect to colour and tenderness, which are defining characteristics of veal.

The loss of the Lacombe Research Centre creates a critical gap that cannot be readily filled by the private sector. Comparable private-sector research is estimated to cost three to four times more than AAFC led work, and lacks the specialized technical expertise required to conduct veal-specific research.

The Canadian Veal Association urges the Government of Canada to maintain a national veal carcass quality and grading research program. To that end, the CVA requests that Dr. Oscar Lopez's program be transferred to another institution, such as the University of Guelph, which has the necessary facilities and is located closer where veal production in Canada occurs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Wynands".

Bob Wynands  
President

*The CVA advances the Canadian veal sector through proactive communication and collaboration. The CVA represents Canada's grain-fed and milk-fed veal production, with approximately 300,000 veal cattle produced annually with over 1,000 veal farms operating in both Ontario and Quebec.*