

B.C. floods: Thousands of pigs, cows, chickens and likely bees died in Fraser Valley

Farmers in B.C.'s flooded Fraser Valley continue to face challenges to repair and restore their properties and livestock.

Agricultural Minister Lana Popham said at a media briefing Thursday with the drier weather and receding floodwaters, it will be critical for the removal of carcasses of animals who died in the flooding.

"We know at this point there are 628,000 poultry reported dead, 420 dairy cattle deceased and approximately 12,000 hogs," she said.

"And also of note, there (are) 110 beehives that have been submerged."

It is not yet known how many bees could have died in the flooding.

Popham said the work by farmers, volunteers and companies to clean out the barns and remove the animals is "extremely heartbreaking.

"I request that folks remain empathetic and caring in their comments as they continue to do this very difficult work. I've been in constant contact with farmers through the latest series of storms, and they're continuing to show their incredible resilience," Popham added.

British Columbia may have seen the last of the "intense storms," according to Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth.

"The worst weather seems to be behind us and I am grateful for that," he said at the media briefing Thursday.

However, the work is far from over.

Popham said they are getting donations of feed and supplies from other farmers in the province and beyond.

"Having to find places for donations is a good problem to have," Popham said.

“The generosity of people is exceptional.

“On Monday, I visited the Abbotsford Emergency Operation Center and I talked with staff who are set up right there in the community. There’s also a dedicated branch of the emergency operation center set up to assist directly with agricultural producers.”

She met with the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Marie-Claude Bibeau, on Wednesday and Popham said there is a recovery package in the works to help farmers return to production.

Popham said the full cost and amount of devastation is still not known in B.C.

For blueberry producers in the Fraser Valley, some farms are still underwater.

“It’s about 700 acres of blueberries in the Sumas Prairie,” Popham said. “We’re not going to be able to know the full extent of the damage of those plants.”

She said everyone can still support blueberry farmers, even though it’s not blueberry season, and buy some frozen berries in the grocery store. That will show how important those farmers are to everyone, she added.

Source:

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