Implementation and importance of animal welfare in livestock production systems: a Canadian view

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What is animal welfare?

- An industry issue
  - A producer concern
  - guidelines
- A retailer’s issue
  - Accountability
- A consumer’s issue
  - trust
- An animal issue
“The private sector has taken the lead in responding in the marketplace, while governments and international associations are working through the intricacies of harmonizing animal welfare definitions, measurements, production standards and established legislation on national and international levels.”

“It is important for those linked to the livestock sector to maintain their knowledge of animal welfare from the perspectives of science, consumer trends, market access, standards and legislation, and supplier requirements.”
Activists and Animal Welfare: Quality Verifications in the Canadian Pork Sector

- “Although a portion of consumers remain largely indifferent to pork products with animal welfare assurances, a group of highly motivated consumers exist with an economic incentive to lobby for tougher animal welfare standards.”

- “At present, a market-driven system using credible quality assurance mechanisms would balance consumer demand.”

- “Quality verification by government was considered credible, but third parties, such as supermarkets, were seen as another source of verification.”

Uzea, 2011

Social expectations (Global)

- What do we need?
- A clear statement of industry standards for animal welfare
- Standards need to reflect values of the society
- Means of assuring the public/consumers that Canadian industries are following these standards
National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC)

What is NFACC?
- National lead for farm animal care in Canada
- Collaborative partnership of diverse stakeholders created to share information and work together on farm animal care and welfare
- Consensus-based model of decision making

NFACC’s focus
- Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals
- Animal Care Assessment Model (ACAM)
- Facilitate information sharing and communication
Canada’s Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice are guidelines for the care and handling of farm animals

- Our national understanding of farm animal care requirements and recommended best practices
- Scientifically informed, practical, and reflect societal expectations for responsible farm animal care

Canada’s Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice serve as

- Education tools
- Reference materials for regulations
- Foundation for animal care assessment programs
Codes of Practice

- Beef Cattle – September 2010 - March 2013
- Mink – October 2010 - October 2012
- Ranched Fox – October 2010 - October 2012
- Pigs – November 2010 - May 2013
- Equine – November 2010 - May 2013
- Sheep – January 2011 - July 2013
- Dairy - Completed

Code developed by National Farm Animal Care Council / DFC:
- 4 Dairy producers
- 1 Humane society
- Transporters
- Food retailer
- CFIA
- Ag Canada
- Provincial Government
- Researcher

Scientists Committee
(animal behaviour, nutrition, veterinary medicine)
Requirements refer to either a regulatory requirement, or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices.

Best practices strive for continuous improvement and encourage a higher level of care.

Recommendations

Input based and Outcome based standards.

Canadian Codes

Canadian codes
- Voluntary!
- Sustainability and Legitimacy
- Are all stakeholders represented in the process
- Narrative to match expectations of public
- What happens if consumers want more animal welfare but find codes lacking?

Bradley and MacRae, 2010
“The days of producer-defined standards are gone. It has to be a multi-stakeholder process,”

David Smith, VP of retail strategy and sustainability with Sobey’s

Canada’s Draft Animal Care Assessment Model (ACAM)

What is the Animal Care Assessment Model (ACAM)?

- A credible process to follow when developing an animal care assessment program
- The ACAM is about the process for program development and implementation. It’s not about specific program content.
Canada’s Draft Animal Care Assessment Model (ACAM)

- The ACAM is intended to:
  - enhance the transparency, legitimacy and credibility of assessment programs developed according to the Model
  - ensure consistency of communications along the value chain
  - further develop Canada’s own cooperative approach to farm animal care
  - assist commodity groups in developing or revising an animal care assessment program by providing an informed framework and useful resources

National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC)

A Proposed Cycle for Code Development and Animal Care Assessment
On Farm Assessments

- Not only for certification
- Not only to pass an audit
- For educational/outreach reasons

Producers adopted some recommended practices & still used them 6 months after the visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visit-day</th>
<th>6 mo later</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record of mortality &amp; morbidity events</td>
<td>36 %</td>
<td>75 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOP for dehorning</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of colostrometer</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>29 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification of immunity transfer</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
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Similar projects

- Lameness in Alberta
- Cow comfort (Alberta, Ontario, Quebec)
- Heifer raising practices (BC, Alberta)
- Producer’s attitudes towards animal welfare and knowledge of codes (Alberta)

Conclusions

- Animal welfare is important in Canada
- Codes of practice are being revised
- A national model for on farm welfare assessment is being piloted.
- Assessments/Benchmarking strategies to demonstrate continuous improvement are going to be expected by retailers.
- Assessments can have benefits outside of formal certification programs
Thank-you

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