

**FARM ANIMAL WELFARE AND
CODES OF PRACTICE
CONSULTATION WORKSHOP**

**REPORT OF
PROCEEDINGS**

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Background and Purpose

In June 2002, the “Federal-Provincial-Territorial Framework Agreement on Agricultural and Agri-Food Policy for the 21st Century” was signed. In the national dialogue which was part of the process of developing the framework, a number of participants advocated the specific inclusion of farm animal welfare within the new policy architecture. In addition, evolving market demands and new developments in science and technology continue to prompt questions about the effectiveness of current methods of addressing farm animal welfare in Canada.

In this connection, the Farm Animal Welfare Consultation Workshop was designed to bring together a diverse group of representatives from all sectors, including producers, processors, consumer groups, animal welfare organizations, academics, government representatives and others. Organized by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the workshop provided the opportunity for participants to share information and perspectives; explore current and emerging issues; and to consider how best to develop, disseminate and implement Canadian farm animal welfare standards (e.g., Codes of Practice).

Specifically, the objectives of the workshop were to:

- determine the needs and alternatives for promoting high quality farm animal care and handling standards;
- establish who will be responsible for achieving the identified needs; and
- determine how the stakeholders will work together to that end.

Consultation Format

The Consultation was designed to maximize opportunities for interaction and dialogue amongst the broad range of perspectives represented by the participants. Presentations, table discussions, and plenary open forum sessions were focused around four topics:

Topic 1: Consumer and Public Concerns

Are there consumer and public concerns about farm animal welfare, and are these being captured and communicated throughout the supply system?

Topic 2: Farm Animal Welfare in a Production Environment

Do Canadian producers have the technology and technical information they need to respond to consumer and public demands?

Topic 3: Canada’s Animal Welfare Standards

Do we have an adequate system of standards, regulations and enforcement to ensure the public that their concerns are being addressed?

Topic 4: Next Steps

What needs to happen to deal with the issues?

Setting the Context

The Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee, Dr. Bill Ballantyne and Dr. David Fraser, provided participants with an overview of some of the key issues and current context related to farm animal welfare in Canada and in other countries.

Dr. Bill Ballantyne Director of Technical Service, Maple Leaf Pork

Dr. Ballantyne observed that farm animal welfare is an issue that can be described in analytical terms, but it is also an emotionally charged issue. He told participants he believes that in Canada we can continue to cost-efficiently use animals for food and that we can do so with appropriate and humane animal handling practices.

He noted that most consumers in Canada believe that good farm animal handling practices already take place. This belief is also generally held by those individuals whose livelihood depends on animal agriculture. However, Canada is a major animal and meat trading nation, particularly in pigs and pork and cattle and beef, and must be prepared to meet the demands of a wide and varied market, both domestic and export. So it is timely and important that Canadian “stakeholders” assess the current issues and situation in the context of a rapidly changing world.

He posed a number of questions for consideration. Are the current farm animal welfare practices okay? Are our laws, regulations and codes appropriate? Can they deal with the demands of both the domestic and international marketplaces? Are we well-represented at the table as rules are developed for animal welfare? Should Canada develop a policy framework for its producers and processors, possibly similar to the one recently developed by the European Union?

Dr. Ballantyne noted that the workshop would provide the opportunity for people with widely ranging perspectives to interact and discuss the issues surrounding farm animal welfare. He emphasized that it is not a meeting to discuss appropriate animal handling practices, but to focus on the broader issues, such as legislation, Canadian practice compared to others, world market realities, audit and control systems, timing and so on.

Dr. David Fraser
Professor, Animal Welfare Program, Faculty of Agriculture Sciences and
W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics, University of British Columbia

Dr. Fraser observed that the current federal role in farm animal welfare consists primarily of slaughter inspection, transport and border inspection, and research. He provided an overview of some of the farm animal welfare issues that have emerged over the years. In the 1950s, the most prominent issue was humane slaughter; in the 1960s, it was humane trucking. From there, the focus turned to on-farm production methods. Legislation was introduced in Canada to address slaughter and transport issues, but it proved to be more difficult to resolve concerns related to on-farm production. Recently, though, rapid changes have occurred. As examples, he cited the European Commission ban on dry sow stalls, a proposal to include animal welfare standards in world trade agreements, and welfare assurance programs that use specialty labeling and certification.

He noted that in the United States the retail sector has been a driving force behind the introduction of standards for animal welfare practices. For example, McDonald's Restaurants (U.S.), Burger King, Wendy's and some grocery chains each developed separate, although similar programs. These programs led to calls for a single set of harmonized standards, currently being developed by the National Council of Chain Restaurants (the U.S. industry association representing Burger King, McDonald's and about 30 other chains) and the Food Marketing Institute (the U.S. based association of grocery distributors representing 2,300 grocery companies). Recently, the United Egg Producers (the U.S. association of egg producers) announced a certification program whereby egg producers can become certified as conforming to the industry's new animal welfare standards.

There is also a rapid move toward the international harmonization of standards, driven by international organizations, transnational companies, and pressure from world trade.

Dr. Fraser noted two trends that are reflected in these activities. The first is the replacement of certain controversial housing and management practices that involve (1) severe restriction of movement, (2) abnormalities such as injuries and disturbed behaviour, and (3) negative states such as pain and hunger. The second trend is the development of clear, simple standards that can be measured and audited. The emerging approach is not based on comprehensive codes of recommendations; rather, it uses selected critical control points that allow a producer, processor or trucker to demonstrate that they are adhering to established practices using a few simple measures.

He highlighted four key resources that the animal industries need to adapt to the rapid change in expectations regarding animal welfare. For each resource, there are a number of questions that need to be considered.

1. Research, development, testing and extension

- Does Canada have the research and development capability that we require to identify and solve animal welfare problems?
- Do we have adequate facilities for testing alternative practices under Canadian farm conditions?
- Does our extension service have the strength and expertise on animal welfare issues to provide the industry with the guidance and support that it needs?

2. The economic climate

- Is there, in Canada, enough communication between producers and retailers so that producers will be properly compensated if they are required to use more costly standards?
- Does Canada have the environment to allow specialty labeling programs (e.g., free-range eggs) to respond to market needs, and is the federal government helping or hindering in the development of these programs?

3. The regulatory system

- What do we want our regulatory system to do?
- Is it delivering on these expectations?

4. Infrastructure and leadership

- What leadership do we need from government, retailers, producers and others, in order to achieve progress on farm animal welfare issues?
- What infrastructure would allow this leadership to develop?

In closing, Dr. Fraser noted that this is a period of rapid change for the agriculture and agri-food sectors. This workshop provides the opportunity for stakeholders to discuss moving forward on issues relating to farm animal welfare – what are the needs currently in Canada, how should Canada position itself, and how can we achieve that?

Participants' Expectations

Participants were invited to discuss their expectations for the workshop.

- Assure the animal's quality of life without jeopardizing quality of life for producers.
- Sense of urgency to have a national set of guidelines, developed by stakeholders, to meet international expectations.
- Have industry, government, stakeholders reach consensus on roles.
- Create an infrastructure that provides leadership for stakeholders.
- Enable more effective lines of communication between stakeholders.
- Fruitful discussion on codes of practice.
- Discover where codes are heading, who will guide them, etc.
- National standard that is auditable, audited.
- Clear understanding of consumer needs; create consumer awareness of standards.
- Organized development of codes on a national level to avoid duplication.
- Understand each other's issues/views re resources, facilities, long-term solutions, etc., and areas where we can work together.
- Expedient and practical solutions.
- Commodity groups combine to set long-term direction.
- Include Quebec in this effort and solution.

Topic 1: Consumer and Public Concerns

Presentation

Nathalie Michaud, *Option consommateurs*, Montreal

Ms. Michaud's presentation, "Consumers and the Issue of Animal Welfare", set the context for the first workshop topic. She outlined her organization's purpose and its position and experience in relation to the agri-food industry. *Option consommateurs* is a not-for-profit Quebec-based organization that "defends the rights and interests of consumers" in many areas. Its work in the agri-food sector has included research on the labeling of genetically engineered foods, certification of organic products, functional foods and traceability of genetically engineered foods.

She noted that food safety and quality is a key issue with consumers. People are willing to pay more for safe and high-quality foods that have been produced in ways that respect the environment and animals. But consumers are not well informed about animal welfare issues – most information is from media reports of "horror stories." As a result, there is a huge gap between scientific knowledge, agricultural practices and the information that consumers receive.

Option consommateurs believes that the animal production sector has a role to play in building consumer awareness by relaying information that demonstrates that producers are very conscious of farm animal welfare and environmental sustainability. It is also important that more scientific research on animal welfare be undertaken, particularly to identify linkages between the effects of production practices on animal welfare and product safety. Canada must first define farm animal welfare and then establish a good code of practices, and consumers should be made aware of the code.

In closing, Ms. Michaud outlined three questions that the organization is posing:

- How will consumers be informed about the codes of practice and their impact on animal welfare?
- Will the implementation of codes of practice affect food prices? Will the consumers be the only ones to pay for the implementation of codes of practice, or will the different stakeholders share the costs?
- What incentives will be established to ensure compliance with the codes of practice?

Workshop Discussion 1 — Consumer and Public Concerns

Participants were given a number of questions designed to spark discussion and help bring forward some of the key issues associated with consumers and farm animal welfare.

- *Are public attitudes and concerns static or changing – and why?*
- *What does the public expect or want with respect to animal welfare?*
- *How and how well are the public's concerns being monitored by producers, retailers, NGOs, government and social scientists?*
- *How does information on these concerns get passed through the production/supply chain?*
- *Are producers adequately informed about public concerns and attitudes?*
- *Do producers receive adequate and timely signals from retailers?*
- *What are the implications of not responding to public concerns?*
 - *Domestically?*
 - *Internationally?*
- *How quickly must action be demonstrated or initiated?*
- *If retailers (chain restaurants, grocery stores) want auditable welfare standards, how will producers demonstrate compliance to the public?*
- *As the public becomes increasingly urban and increasingly attached to their companion animals (pets), is there likely to be an increase in demand for proof of good animal welfare?*

In the plenary reporting and discussion session, the following key issue areas and themes emerged:

Defining the “publics” and the issues

Participants felt that there is a need to identify and define the “publics” – which may include Canadian consumers, international trading partners, retailers, producers, and processors. There are also demographic, cultural and ethical considerations, including religious beliefs associated with animal welfare. But, *everyone* is a “consumer.” Approaches (re education, standards) need to respect and balance diversity and differences.

Similarly, there is a need to identify the issues that are of concern to the various publics. Participants wondered if issues such as confinement, debeaking, tail docking and other production practices are really of concern to a broad spectrum of people, or only to a small minority. How can this be determined?

Participants questioned the criteria that are used to define animal welfare – science-based, religious-based, ethics-based? Whose definition is to be used?

Awareness and education

Participants noted that there is a “low level of visibility and awareness of the existing codes,” and that this has created a gap between consumers and the animal food production sector. The media is more interested in sensationalizing animal welfare issues, so use of media to reach consumers about production practices is difficult. However, industry led information may be seen to be “propaganda.” It is important that consumers have easy access to reliable, credible sources of information at varying levels of detail, so that consumers can make their own decisions on the depth of knowledge desired. There is also a need to clarify information and misinformation concerning safe food, labeling, organic products, etc.

Participants wondered whether the public is really seeking raised awareness. Some participants felt that the majority of consumers are not interested in gaining knowledge about specific agricultural practices, but they do want to know that their food is raised in a humane manner with recognizable standards of humane practice. The “CSA stamp of approval” on bicycle helmets provides a parallel comparison. The key point is *assurance*: consumers want to be assured that humane practices are being followed, without full knowledge/awareness of the specific details of the processes involved. They want assurance that there is responsibility and accountability for following humane practices. This assurance must come from a credible source – participants suggested that all stakeholders “crystallized” around a set of standards and speak from one credible voice.

Participants noted that the four provincial industry-led Farm Animal Councils do an excellent job of providing information and feedback to producers on consumer issues and concerns.

Conflicting interests

One of the key “conflicts” is the consumer’s desire for cheap, nutritious food and their expectations regarding production practices. Similarly, there are conflicting interests surrounding standards for companion animals vs. farm animals. Participants noted that consumers do not seem to differentiate between “animal rights” and “animal welfare.” “Animal welfare” usually refers to the animal’s quality of life which can, to a degree, be studied by scientific means; “animal rights” often refers to philosophical beliefs about the moral standing of animals and about the moral appropriateness of using or treating animals in various ways. Associated with this theme is the general lack of understanding about rural/farm life and agricultural practices – Canadians are less “connected to the farm.”

Price/cost issues

Participants noted that the public has an expectation that all food is safe and produced humanely – labels of “safe, safer, safest” or “humane, humane-er, humane-est” would not be acceptable. However, some consumers are willing to pay more for products that use certain specific and identified practices (niche markets). Similarly, consumers will avoid products that are associated with negative issues.

Participants see a need for a cost/benefit analysis: Who pays to do things differently? Does it cost more to follow practices that are perceived as being more humane than current practices? Would any increased costs be spread across stakeholders, or are consumers expected to pick up the costs? So far, there are no clear consumer signals as to what is acceptable in terms of cost/quality benefits. Compliance issues would also need to be factored in to a cost/benefit analysis.

Current regulatory environment

Canada has regulations covering the transportation of animals and the slaughter of animals at most slaughter facilities, plus *Criminal Code* provisions and certain provincial statutes that apply in a limited way to animals in a production environment. More comprehensive and/or additional farm animal welfare standards or regulations should be put in place.

Drivers

Participants identified a number of elements that are driving these issues, including:

- Rapid changes in agriculture practices.
- The complexity of all aspects of the supply chain (producers, processors, retailers).
- The consumers' right to know and increased access to information.
- International trade/export market.
- Special interest groups: producers, government, media, animal welfare groups.
- Other consumer issues: food safety, food quality, biosecurity.

Suggestions for Action

Participants suggested the following:

- Communication: develop a strategy for communication, dialogue and exchange of information between consumers and other stakeholders. The strategy must recognize the multiplicity of stakeholders and the diversity of consumers.
- Develop regulatory standards, balanced with voluntary practices.
- Recognize that there is urgency involved, however there is also a need for short, medium and long term planning.
- Develop definitions that respect and facilitate choice. Address distinctions between animal welfare and food safety.
- Be always mindful of international standards/marketplace.

Topic 2: Farm Animal Welfare in a Production Environment

Presentation

Dr. Derek Anderson

Chair, Canada Committee on Animals, Canadian Agrifood Research Council

Dr. Anderson reviewed a “route to a system that satisfies those truly interested in animal production that accounts for farm animal welfare.” It is a four step or element process.

The first element of such a system is the development of science-based parameters that define the welfare of particular species. This requires scientific investigation. Dr. Anderson noted that at this time, there seems to be more discussion on the topic of animal welfare than actual commitment (funding) to research and development.

The second element is the incorporation of that science into the production system for each species. It must be economically viable – the cost of changes cannot be prohibitive. Dr. Anderson noted that it is very difficult for producers to make costly changes when consumers still expect cheap product. The science must be moved from the theoretical to the applied and tested in production systems. Dr. Anderson noted that the downsizing of extension services in most provinces has had an impact on the delivery of technology to producers. Scientists must ensure that their information is communicated so that it can be applied.

Third, there must be documentation that shows that the science is correct and applicable to the production system. There are costs involved in changing and adapting to new systems and these costs need to be determined.

Lastly, it is important that there be verification of the use of animal welfare systems. Dr. Anderson noted that a verification system could provide an advantage in the international marketplace.

In closing, he put forward a number of questions for participants to consider:

- Who funds and who does farm animal welfare R&D: producers, NGOs, federal government, provinces?
- Is the current R&D effort sufficient?
- Is there sufficient on-farm testing of alternative production practices?
- How (and how adequately) does extension pass this information to producers?
- Are there economic and other factors (price incentives, access to technology) that help or prevent producers from responding to animal welfare concerns?
- Are R&D and extension needed to develop and support specialty products?

Workshop Discussion 2 — Farm Animal Welfare in a Production Environment

Do Canadian producers have the technology and technical information they need to respond to consumer and public demands? In their table groups, participants discussed issues surrounding farm animal welfare in a production environment. The following provides an overview of the plenary discussion.

What is the sector currently doing?

To the best of their ability, producers are responding to consumer demands. However, they can only respond to what they know about. The producer sector is struggling to better understand what is wanted and what is needed by the consumer public. For producer organizations and producers themselves, this is a key challenge.

The production sector is trying to pick up some of the slack on the research and development side that has been dropped elsewhere to address issues related to good production environments and practices. These are not limited to those related directly to consumer wants. An example is research surrounding the use of antibiotics.

The sector is also working on food safety issues and addressing the proper mix of production efficiency, marketability, and animal health and welfare – while trying to remain competitive. That is a huge task.

The sector has been actively using genetic selection to adapt animals to the production environment over time. In addition, the sector is also beginning to address on-farm safety, and some aspects of farm animal welfare are part of on-farm safety programs.

The general public is unlikely to see the inner workings of a farm for health and safety and security reasons, so how can we assure them that what takes place behind closed doors meets with their social/ethical standards?

First, consumer research needs to be done to identify the public social/ethical standards – what is the public really thinking? Research is also needed to identify current understanding and knowledge – what do consumers believe is already in place in terms of farm animal welfare – and to identify actions to increase awareness as required.

Once the standards are known, information can be conveyed to consumers through education programs, trade shows, websites, information on product packaging, advertisements, and through industry and producer self-monitoring programs using codes of practice.

Verification programs would assure consumers. Questions to be considered include: Would existing programs be sufficient, or do new ones need to be developed? How would standards be reviewed and updated? Is the current 5-year program under CARC adequate? Who is responsible for audits and verification? Would audits and verification meet the public standards? Who will fund the cost involved – will commodity groups end up paying the entire costs?

Is there a mid-way between laying down hard measures on the one hand, and the exercise of subjective judgment based on good animal management on the other?

Participants discussed the possibility of developing codes through the International Standards (ISO) system, which is recognized by the World Trade Organization, and the possibility of working with the United States to create a North American standard.

Participants recognized the use of voluntary codes. However there is a real need, particularly at the retail level, to be able to offer assurance to consumers in the form of an auditable system. National standards, as opposed to voluntary codes, would provide the opportunity for certification.

The existing codes could “comparatively easily” be the base for national standards. It is important that national standards are equivalent to international standards to remain competitive in foreign markets – although the U.S. was seen to be a more important marketplace than the European Union in terms of trade.

Participants emphasized the need for universal standards – the licensing for game farms has demonstrated that it is possible to successfully introduce universal standards when supported by grandfathering clauses.

Whether voluntary codes or regulations are used, there must be a certification process associated with the standards. But there needs to be some flexibility: wording that includes “should” will allow for the standards to evolve with new science, at which time the “should” can become a “shall.” Participants felt that more research and science is needed. It is important that new knowledge be incorporated as it becomes available.

How can we help the public to see the big picture of animal welfare and not concentrate on individual pictures that may capture their attention?

It is important to provide information about farm animal welfare, and it must be both factual and credible. All stakeholders have a role to play in relaying information.

Participants saw a need for two approaches to information dissemination: a “push” approach that sends information out to consumers and a “pull” approach that allows consumers to access information themselves. Circumstances will dictate which approach is more appropriate. However, the key public are those people who are genuinely interested in the issues, rather than the public at large. Hence, it is more important to make information available to those who want it than to “push” information on the public at large.

Participants felt that it would be useful to have more factual and credible information available on animal welfare for schools, veterinary colleges and the media. Opportunities for one-on-one contact for more information should be available as well. Participants noted that it may be necessary to provide alternative sources of information. For example, if the agricultural industry is promoting their vision of animal welfare, it may be seen as biased. Hence, other sources of information, such as government, veterinary and academic organizations, should be used where possible.

The “big picture” needs to include the entire process, from production through to processing and transport and distribution. It needs to incorporate both sides of the story: the viewpoints of the animal welfare groups and the viewpoints of the producer groups. There is a need for recognition and acknowledgment that both these groups may base their viewpoints from different perspectives; some participants felt that the producer groups are coming from a science-based perspective, while the animal welfare groups may base their viewpoints on “gut reactions, personal morality or religious beliefs.” When promoting their viewpoints, groups must be honest about their perspective and bias. Groups also need to talk more to each other.

Participants observed that there is a need to provide consumers and the public access to all the information in an honest and frank manner, and let them choose how they will react. “If we are up-front, realistic and transparent – we will successfully get the story out.”

How can the sector demonstrate what it is doing to a skeptical public that may be misinformed?

Participants noted that there is first a need for credible science-based information, and second that this information must be relayed to the extension activities like producer groups, consumers, journals, etc. Education in the school system is important, but there are challenges such as curriculum limitations, ability to reach teachers, etc.

Participants observed that any audit program related to certification must be administered through an independent third party. However, it is premature to demonstrate compliance when we are only in the process of creating standards.

There were questions raised regarding the “skeptical public.” Are skeptical consumers a majority or a minority? How should resources be allocated to convince these publics? Participants felt that efforts must be directed at all consumers, not just the skeptics. A balanced approach is needed.

Dealing with media coverage is a key challenge – advertising is expensive, and the media tends to not be interested unless the story is “sensational.” The “urban/rural divide” is another consideration, along with the “double standards” that exist amongst the public’s perceptions regarding farm animals, wildlife and companion animals.

How can we overcome misinformation and bad science?

Participants noted that there is the potential for bad science and there is certainly misinformation available. In the past, extension specialists have played a role in interpreting information. However, there has been a decrease in these specialists and a resulting decreased emphasis on technology transfer. There needs to be a reputable and credible source of information that not only producers but the general public can use to access information. The information source should be publicly funded and accountable, similar to Health Canada’s source of information on GMOs. Such a system would ensure that all those with an interest would feel that the information was something they could count on and use.

Bad science may be the result of poor experiment design. In addition, results of research projects that were designed for a certain purpose are sometimes “stretched” to answer other questions or hypotheses. This is possibly a result of limited and over-extended resources. Adequate funding is needed.

Unless funded by industry associations, scientific results tend to be published only in scientific journals. Scientists need to become better communicators. In addition, science associations need to speak out against “bad science” and instigate peer review of publications.

Misinformation can be avoided by bringing together all stakeholders to achieve consensus. The codes of practice development process has brought various stakeholders together, however government, industry and the grocery/food service industry need to also be involved in developing agreement on criteria and practices.

Participants noted that while it is important to identify what it is that consumers want, it is also necessary to recognize that this may not be what the animal needs. Retail driven standards may not be taking all animal needs into considerations. Similarly, it is important to recognize that although animal welfare is science-based, science is not the primary criterion used by the public.

What are the priority areas for response?

Participants noted that the animal is the priority, not the consumer. Animal welfare is for the “public good” and needs to be addressed.

Greater research efforts on a broader range of species and industries and on alternative production methods are needed. There should be more targeted research on those areas that are identified by consumers as “controversial” before those practices are introduced or eliminated. It would be useful to introduce ways to bring producers into the research process. A key problem is that the information that is available is not reaching producers – this reflects on the lack of extension services. In addition, downsizing has led to a loss of corporate knowledge.

Can the response help in marketing – domestically and internationally?

There is a need to utilize all available mechanisms for coordination and collaboration nationally across all animal agriculture sectors. There is a potential to look at science-based national standards, that are credible, practical, easy to define and describe and that are subject to some verification method. Internationally, response is a necessity, including auditable standards. Domestically, based on consumers’ expectations, it will help as well.

Are there economic or other factors, e.g., price incentives, access to technology, etc., that help or prevent producers from responding to concerns over animal welfare?

Participants noted that negative or marginal production margins contribute to producers not responding to new or improved practices. It is dangerous to pay people to have better

practices – we may pay for “perception not reality.” It has to be an industry-wide response.

A multiplicity of verification systems needs to be avoided. There are new and significant pressures coming onto producers, including on-farm safety, environmental, biosecurity and animal welfare issues. An overarching mechanism that could deal with these four areas would be best. It would also be prudent to first put a budget together and figure out what’s possible, rather than creating a program and putting the costs onto producers.

There needs to be an increase in national and regional-based research. And while efforts need to be made to get information to producers, they must also seek out information. Producers should use the codes to help promote what they are doing.

The “Brand Canada” concept that has been used elsewhere in the agriculture sector to promote the quality of Canadian products should be applied to farm animal welfare practices. There may be opportunities to use this to convey to consumers both domestically and internationally our commitment to animal welfare standards.

Participants also noted that it is important to keep in mind that there is a great dependence on the international marketplace and that we need to remain competitive.

Day 1 Wrap Up Remarks

Dr. John Church Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Dr. Church told participants that a lot had been achieved over the course of the day. Although it is not clear what the consumers are thinking, in light of the decisions that the major retailers/food service companies (like McDonald’s and Burger King) are making, farm animal welfare is on their radar screen.

He reviewed the key messages from the day:

- The international market is a key driver of the animal welfare issues.
- There is a recognition of the need for research to develop good national standards that can be audited. Current research resources are stretched, and there is a real need for adequate funding. The question is, where will the money come from?
- What consumers want, may not be what animals need or want.
- Our trading partners are working on these issues; we should seek to work together to achieve global solutions.
- Let’s keep animal welfare front and center.

In closing, he noted that workshop participants are genuinely concerned about animal welfare. As he put it, “While you might disagree on the details, I am impressed that everyone’s heart is in the right place.”

DAY 2

Retail Perspective

Jeanne Cruikshank

Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors

The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors (CCGD) represents the big grocery retailers in Canada, including Sobeys, Loblaws, Safeway and others. The CCGD commissioned a report, *Animal Welfare Verification in Canada: A Discussion Paper*, which will be available soon.

The CCGD believes that codes of practice can and should be the backbone of the best management practices for farm animal welfare verification programs that are auditable in Canada. These verification programs need to be a living and well-attended document. The organization also believes that the Canadian on-farm food safety program is the most appropriate delivery vehicle for implementation.

The Canadian animal agriculture production industry is well positioned to deal with the likely animal welfare requirements of food retailers. These requirements will become more of an issue with Canadian retailers once the process is completed in the United States. Similarity in animal welfare standards between the two countries should mean the economic impact of implementing food retailer requirements should not be significant in producer and slaughter facilities. Retailers are not asking for more layers, but rather for recognition of things that are already practiced. There is a recognition, however, that costs are involved.

In closing, Ms. Cruikshank noted that it is important that all stakeholders work together to “leverage these strengths.” The challenges are market realities. A timetable, for example, along with mechanisms for implementation, are necessary next steps.

Topic 3: Canada's Animal Welfare Standards

Presentation

Bob VanTongerloo

Canadian Federation of Humane Societies

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies represents over 100 animal welfare organizations in Canada. Mr. VanTongerloo noted that the current codes provide standards for animal husbandry, with self-policing and significant negative deviations leading sometimes to criminal charges. Humane Society officers are able to use the codes of practice for possible prosecution. However, not all parties to the code are happy with all aspects of the codes. Another key problem is the inconsistency across sectors and industries in terms of the general level of awareness and understanding of the codes.

The current legislation that covers farm animal welfare includes the Criminal Code of Canada, the Health of Animals Act (federal), the Meat Inspection Act (federal and provincial) and other provincial/territorial legislation. Mr. VanTongerloo posed a number of questions: In developing and updating the codes, what is the primary motivation of industry – to improve animal welfare standards, to keep costs down, to avoid external control? Have government, animal welfare, animal rights and other stakeholders done their best to ensure that the codes are the best they can be? If we don't have the codes, then what? Should the industry regulate itself, letting the market dictate actions? How about keeping the status quo? Why not give the role to corporate players, such as McDonald's and Burger King, and let them set the standards for suppliers? These are questions that this workshop and ongoing discussions will hope to address.

Workshop Discussion 3 — Canada’s Animal Welfare Standards

Do we have an adequate system of standards, regulations and enforcement to assure the public that their concerns are being addressed?

There was a divergence of views expressed on this topic and mixed feelings were evident in a number of areas, including:

- Whether the current system is adequate and effective.
- Whether the food service/retail sector has a role to play in the development of standards and what that role should be (observer, player, driver?).
- Whether codes/standards should be voluntary or regulatory (especially in terms of response to change – regulations cannot be changed overnight).
- Who benefits from a consensus-based development process – animals or producers?
- Jurisdictional considerations (should codes/standards be national, provincial/territorial, or international?).

Some participants felt that the current standards and regulations are adequate – however, they are only adequate if enforcement is carried out consistently and properly. In particular, federal regulations on slaughter and transportation were recognized as adequate, however participants noted that they are not well supported in terms of inspection and enforcement. Participants see this as a direct result of a reduction in inspectors. Some participants emphasized that some of the current standards and codes allow practices that cause animals pain and suffering. Hence, a participant stated that, “we should be cautious about saying that these standards are acceptable.”

On the provincial/territorial front, participants noted that provincial regulations are not uniform. Provincial bodies use codes of practice combined with farm animal councils and producer peer assistance programs (where they exist) in trying to achieve consistency and acceptable welfare practices. Some participants felt that national regulations would produce consistency across all provinces, but noted that “it is important that existing regulations be properly adhered to before considering new or additional regulations.” Some participants suggested exploring the possibility of taking the current codes and “reformatting” them into national standards. This would add credibility, both domestically and internationally.

Many participants observed that it is important that national standards are developed with the international marketplace in mind – codes must be accepted internationally. The market is capable of dictating standards – GMO potatoes is an example of how the marketplace can affect practices. As one group put it, “The importance of international trade will dictate the importance of national standards.”

Some participants felt that codes should be national, although not necessarily developed, implemented, enforced or administered by the federal government. Another body could take that role (e.g., an independent organization).

Some participants noted that it is important that standards are auditable. However, there was a concern expressed that there needs to be a legitimate reason for auditing, as the process will impact on producers' incomes. As one group asked, "we need to know who is asking for audits, what purpose they will serve, and will audits really increase animal welfare?" In response, participants indicated that retailers will be seeking an auditable system as a source of reassurance for their customers. One group emphasized that, "we must have a Canadian national auditable standard that meets or exceeds what our exporting partners are asking for, and that will give confidence to Canadian consumers."

Participants noted that producers are generally well aware of codes, although some sectors/commodities are better informed than others. As one group noted, "the codes serve as a species-specific educational tool for producers." There is a real need for better communication and awareness about the codes and their application. Participants suggested that codes have a dual role: to provide standards of practice and to provide information (i.e., regulatory and informative).

A participant noted producers are well aware that animal welfare directly impacts on farm income – better cared for animals are more profitable. However, the on-farm regulatory environment is becoming burdensome, extreme and invasive, so much so that it is affecting farm incomes and threatening the existence of the family farm in Canada.

Participants related the farm animal welfare situation to the on-farm food safety efforts, which have increased knowledge and understanding across production sectors and with processors and consumers. The codes could focus on a few key indicators, with or without verification, and these will translate into standard practices (as they have for on-farm food safety), rather than regulations.

Participants noted that enforcement is not consistent across the country. There was concern about who pays for enforcement. There must be the political will for any enforcement.

There was agreement around the notion that things are not moving fast enough toward change, and that there is a need for adequate funding to support development and implementation of standards. A number of participants noted that the multi-stakeholder approach to develop codes is valuable. As one group noted, "Leadership should come from both government and industry – neither can do it alone, neither should do it alone."

TOPIC 4 – Next Steps: What, Who, When and With What Resources?

Presentation

Sally Rutherford, Director General, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Integrated Policy Systems

Ms. Rutherford commended participants, with so many different perspectives, for working together on the various issues related to farm animal welfare in Canada. She noted that it is important that “we figure out how to accommodate all the interests in a way that will continue to allow Canada – not Canadian farmers, or Canadian processors or Canadian retailers – but Canada to have a really strong and vibrant food production system that is acceptable to consumers both here and abroad.”

There are huge responsibilities on stakeholders to figure out how to achieve both the goals of their organizations and their personal goals as consumers. Practical, cost effective, enforceable solutions must be found. Solutions must be found that bring together the various sides of the issues, including those for whom food production is their livelihood and those who have legitimate concerns about how food is produced.

The federal government’s Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) has to take in concerns and jurisdictional realities of the provincial governments. Consumers are another key component of the framework, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada places significant emphasis on reporting to Canadians.

Ms. Rutherford observed that change doesn’t happen overnight. “It takes time to develop the codes, time to change infrastructure, time to develop enforcement and oversight systems.” She encouraged participants to view this as not delays, but progressions. As with many other issues, farm animal welfare is not static – systems must be able to respond to changing circumstances and expectations.

In closing she noted that this workshop and consultation is a beginning exercise. From here, we can figure out our next steps. You can count on participating further in discussions on these issues.

Q&A Session / Open Forum

Q. Will there be adequate funding to support codes of practice?

A. Before we can say if there will be funds available, we need to know what the system will be.

Q. What is the link between the Agricultural Policy Framework and animal welfare?

A. The APF covers a range of issues and looks at how AAFC is moving forward into the future. Animal welfare is a piece of the framework, and its importance is recognized by the department.

Q. *If legislation is the way to move forward, will this be a joint federal/provincial responsibility, a federal responsibility or a provincial responsibility?*

A. Animal welfare is a provincial responsibility. Certainly the federal government has responsibility in certain areas, particularly as animals move across borders, but we are not looking at rewriting the constitution. The process is about finding new ways of doing business and managing in a similar manner across the country.

Q. *Under what pillar of the APF would animal welfare fall under?*

A. It would likely fall under “quality”. This reflects our international approach to quality, where quality is the umbrella and safety and other specifications fall under it.

Presentation

Susan Church

Alberta Farm Animal Care Association

Ms. Church told participants that “it is up to each of us to take responsibility for the development of a meaningful plan.”

She noted three recent examples of how farm animal welfare is a key issue. First, a recent meeting in the United States, called “Standards for Food Animal Production: Status, Well-being and Social Responsibility,” focused on the industry perspective in terms of the current situation and what has to be done. The focus was not on whether farm animal welfare is an issue – clearly, it was recognized that it is an issue, and one for which the food animal production industry is responsible.

Second, the American Meat Institute Animal Handling and Stunning Conference of February 2002 was attended by more than 300 people. Three years ago, only 70 people attended that conference. The conference was organized by industry, for industry, and included breakout sessions focussing on animal welfare guidelines.

And third, last spring PETA challenged Canada Safeway to sign on to FMI (Food Marketing Institute) guidelines. In response, Canada Safeway asked industry to provide solid information on what is taking place with regard to animal welfare.

She told participants that it is time to decide the future of farm animal welfare for Canada. She stated that participants need to “set up a time frame and ensure we, as an industry, move forward.”

In closing, she acknowledged the dedicated work of the Steering Committee in organizing this workshop, and encouraged participants to “charge on.”

Workshop Discussion 4 — Next Steps

In their table groups, participants discussed the following questions in terms of next steps:

- Is farm animal welfare a public good issue or a market issue, or both?
- Is animal welfare a public or market responsibility? Or both?
- Does there need to be monitoring of public concerns and future marketing/trade implications?
- Does there need to be more national harmonization of standards to assure domestic and international customers?
- Who should take the lead?
 - Retailers and their associations?
 - Producer organizations (national, provincial)?
 - Animal welfare or consumer NGOs?
 - Federal government?
 - Provincial/territorial governments?
 - A national council of stakeholders?
- Who will fund this?
- What time frame do we have?

The following provides a summary of the plenary discussion.

There was general consensus that farm animal welfare is both a public good and a market issue. As one group noted, the issue is “public good, but it has market implications and it is influenced by markets.” Clearly, the public is concerned and the marketplace is involved. Similarly, participants felt that both the public and the market are responsible for farm animal welfare. Some participants noted that as a public good issue, it should be the responsibility of the government.

Some participants suggested that a necessary first step would be to conduct an accurate review of the current situation in order to create a benchmark and a common standard of understanding. Such a review would:

- identify what is done now;
- seek comparisons of current Canadian codes against requirements of international customers and competitors;
- identify and prioritize the expectations and needs of domestic consumers; and
- identify deficiencies (if any), along with corrective measures.

Similarly, it is important to define “welfare.” Some participants suggested that “ability to express normal behaviour patterns” should be part of the definition.

Generally, participants agreed that national standards that are internationally acceptable are appropriate. As one group put it, “national standards are important because to our trading partners, Canada is a country not a collection of provinces.” However, it was

recognized that there are provincial/ regional differences, and some participants noted that any local issues should not be impeded or prevented by national standards.

Participants identified characteristics and components of codes of practice/standards for farm animal welfare, including:

- Must be auditable.
- Existing codes of practice are a good starting point.
- Equivalence with U.S. is critical.
- Practical and include a phase-in approach that helps people adapt.
- Flexible to support continuous improvement as knowledge evolves.

Some participants noted that codes should have a dual purpose. One purpose would be to provide technical information and standards. This part needs to include “shoulds” and “shalls,” which was seen to lead to a more auditable process. The second purpose would be to inform, educate and build awareness both for producers and consumers. Participants noted that a model is already in place under the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and felt that this could be easily adapted to farm animal welfare. There may be other models that are also suitable and adaptable in order to avoid reinventing the wheel, so all options should be explored.

Other comments included:

- It is important to monitor, review and apply knowledge and understanding about species-specific animal welfare practices as it becomes available.
- A cautious approach should be taken to adapting or imposing U.S. standards on Canadian commodities, which can be lower than current Canadian codes.
- In regard to harmonization of standards: there is already a good degree of continuity and consistency of production standards. It is important to differentiate between commercial-scale production and small hobby flocks and herds.
- Consider an approach that would recognize ISO standards as appropriate.

Who is responsible

Participants offered a number of suggestions regarding who should provide leadership for moving forward on the farm animal welfare issue, although there was no agreement on which group could best lead. Among the suggestions were:

- The federal government.
- Government to provide support but not leadership.
- Industry organizations should take a leadership role, especially national commodity groups and production/sector organizations.
- Producer organizations take the lead, with balanced input from a national council of stakeholders.
- The Canadian Agrifood Research Council (CARC).
- The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA).
- The Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC).
- The Steering Committee from this workshop process.

Most participants did agree with the notion that a multistakeholder advisory body be established. This committee or council could review existing codes in Canada and in other countries and make recommendations. However, there was a divergence of opinion regarding the composition of the committee or council. Some participants felt that all stakeholders should be involved, including producers, processors, consumers, food service, retail, veterinarians, and academia, and that membership should be open to anyone or any organization who is interested in the issues surrounding farm animal welfare. As one participant noted, “everyone in this room should participate on the committee.” On the other side, some participants felt that the stakeholder group should be comprised only of individuals or organizations that have “a tangible level of vested interest – not groups or individuals with emotional interests only.”

Other comments regarding leadership and responsibility included:

- Build on what we already have – don’t reinvent the wheel.
- Animal welfare to be included as part of another program, such as on-farm safety, quality assurance, etc.

Timeframe

Participants agreed that immediate action is needed. As one group put it, “the situation is critical – we must act now.” The multistakeholder body should be established as soon as possible – “over the next three months.” The committee or council must be adequately funded and provided with technical and staff support.

While it is important that immediate steps be taken to respond to current pressures, participants noted that it is important to not overlook key long term issues at the same time, such as requirements for research on animal welfare and identification of best practices and consumer concerns.

In this connection, one group suggested the following short-term and long-term approaches:

- Short term plans (immediate to two year timeframe):
- Continue funding the current code structure and “keep the ball rolling” while other alternatives are investigated.
- Communicate and build awareness about existing standards, to both producers and the public.
- Develop national stakeholder committee, based on CARC or CAHC. Set mandate for committee.
- Explore long-term approaches.

Longer term (more than two years) options for consideration:

- Develop code-based “standards” that would include regular reviews and updating.
- Certification system that could be incorporated into an existing framework instead of setting up a new process.
- Explore declaration at point of sale (farm gate) by producer that certain animal welfare standards have been observed, instead of certification process.
- Determine how the program selected will be funded.

Funding

Some participants suggested that the federal government should provide funding and in-kind input to the national stakeholder council/committee. These funds/inputs would not be the sole responsibility of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, but rather shared by other departments that also have interests, influence and impact on animal food production, such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In addition, matched funding should be provided by producer organizations and other members of the national stakeholder group. One group stated that “if there is a good strategy, funding will follow.” Participants reiterated the need for adequate funding to support research.

Next Steps Overview

Dr. Frédérique Moulin Canadian Food Inspection Agency Animal Products Directorate

Dr. Moulin introduced the members of the Steering Committee as well as representatives of the AAFC/CFIA Joint Animal Welfare Committee who were present at the workshop. In addition to Dr. Moulin, the members of the AAFC/CFIA Animal Welfare Coordinating Committee in attendance were Ms. Heather Cloutier, Communications Branch, AAFC; Ms. Camilla Corrigan, Communications Bureau, CFIA; Dr. Gord Doonan, Animal Health and Production Division, CFIA; Mr. Garry Hewston, Policy Branch, AAFC; Ms. Lena Hill, Foods of Animal Origin Division, CFIA; Dr. S.K. Ho, Research Branch, AAFC; and Dr. David Trus, Marketing and Information Services Branch, AAFC.

Dr. Moulin told participants that a report of the proceedings of the workshop would be prepared by Intersol Consulting. Each participant will receive a copy of the report, after it has been reviewed by the Steering Committee. Recommendations from the report will be submitted to the senior management of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and available to participants and others.

Feedback from Co-Chairs

The Steering Committee Co-Chairs, Dr. David Fraser and Dr. Bill Ballantyne, provided a summary of the key messages they had heard over the course of the two-day workshop, along with a re-cap of the next steps.

Dr. David Fraser

**Professor, Animal Welfare Program, Faculty of Agriculture Sciences and
W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics, University of British Columbia**

Dr. Fraser thanked participants for their commitment and cooperation, especially considering the diverse perspectives represented.

He observed that in the European Union, farm animal welfare has become a highly political issue, with governments and international bodies imposing standards on the animal industries in response to political pressures. In the United States the retail sector is providing key leadership, requiring suppliers to meet standards that serve the needs of major retailers. Each of these situations has certain drawbacks. He believes that Canada can do better through a concerted effort to include all sectors in the decision-making process.

He reviewed some of the very different messages that had emerged at the workshop from the different levels in the supply chain. At the consumer level, in Canada there continues to be a reasonable level of trust by consumers in how animal welfare is handled. However, pressures internationally are affecting this perception. At the retail level, there is the need to assure customers about Canadian farm animal welfare standards, and retailers are looking for this assurance as quickly as possible. At the producer level, which Dr. Fraser believes is by far the most important level in terms of animal welfare, there is tremendous diversity. But it is important that the producer sector be on side with whatever decision and directions are taken on the farm animal welfare issues.

To illustrate the complexity of the situation, Dr. Fraser noted that in the U.S., a major chain restaurant may buy its eggs from a single supplier. If the restaurant wants to stipulate certain animal welfare standards, it is relatively easy to communicate with the supplier, negotiate standards and prices, and verify that the standards are being followed. At the other end of the scale, the beef industry in Canada has roughly 90,000 cow/calf ranchers selling to a large number of feedlots, selling to a small number of slaughter plants. In this case, the size and complexity of the industry make it much more difficult to communicate the need for standards, negotiate the details of the standards, and create a system to demonstrate that the standards are being followed.

Dr. Fraser observed that while the word “audit” is a reassuring word to retailers, it is a less than reassuring word to at least some producers. In some sectors, the idea of audits for animal welfare purposes is acceptable, while other sectors look upon audits as impractical, onerous, costly and unnecessary. The key goal, however, is to retain (or recover) the trust of consumers in how animal products are produced. In the different

sectors, this goal may have to be achieved through different mixtures of audits, extension, education, data collection, and quality assurance.

Dr. Fraser provided an overview of the next steps that had been highlighted by participants at the workshop. He noted that one of the common messages was the desire for a formal structure that will link consumers, processors, retailers, producers and other groups. There needs to be more communication up and down the supply chain, although there was disagreement over who should be involved.

A key question is, who is going to provide the leadership for that process? Dr. Fraser noted that there had been a divergence of opinions and suggestions, including the Canadian Animal Health Coalition, the Canadian Agrifood Research Council, and the producer sector through the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. There was agreement that there needs to be a cohesive, capable body with an infrastructure and staff support.

In terms of the time lines for action, Dr. Fraser emphasized that it is important to move forward on this momentum as quickly as possible: by January of 2003 there should be a multistakeholder council or committee in place to develop plans.

Dr. Bill Ballantyne
Director of Technical Service, Maple Leaf Pork

Dr. Ballantyne joined Dr. Fraser in thanking participants for their input and insights into this emotional and controversial issue. He noted that a number of messages had emerged during the course of the workshop, including:

- Next steps need to be supported with appropriate funding.
- There is a diversity of opinion across the commodity groups: some feel that farm animal welfare issues are exceedingly complex, while others feel that they are not important.
- Groups that represent the marketplace have made it clear that they want assurances that the Canadian practices are appropriate and that there is some form of audit – and they want it soon.

Dr. Ballantyne observed that the progress and discussions made at the workshop reflect the efforts of a diverse group of people who listened to each other and who contributed their ideas in order to make changes where they are required.