



## Standards of Care

There are many different opinions and perspectives involved in the study, husbandry and care of domestic animals, including livestock and companion animals.

Many countries have developed Codes of Practice for the care and handling of domestic animals in an attempt to try to establish a **standard of care**. Standard of care can be a legal term. It refers to the attention, caution, watchfulness and **prudence** [act of being careful] that a reasonable person would exercise. If a person's actions do not meet the standard of care, then he or she fails to meet the duty of care which all people should have towards others.

In Canada, the Codes of Practice are nationally developed, voluntary guidelines for the care and handling of different species of farm animals. These Codes provide required and recommended practices to protect the health and welfare of farm animals. However, they are not **legislated**, which means they are not laws. The Codes are designed to be used as a tool that help animal owners ensure that sound animal welfare practices are followed.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has also developed Codes of Practice for dog boarding and breeding kennels as well as **catteries**, places where cats are boarded or bred.

The Codes of Practice do not cover all situations, but try to define high standards for the basic principles of animal care and management. The recommendations in the Codes of Practice are based on the best knowledge currently available. These recommendations are based on the following "standards:"

- The purpose of the Codes is to promote the welfare of animals. Those involved with animals must make an effort to inform themselves and others in the proper care and handling practices.
- People working with animals must have due regard for their welfare.
- People involved with animals should be aware of the welfare of animals under their care or the care of others.
- It is the responsibility of people working with animals to be knowledgeable of proper care and handling. Ignorance is not acceptable as an excuse for cruelty and neglect.

## Perspectives and Opinions

People involved with animal science and husbandry can hold differing opinions about what is most important in the care and welfare of animals.

We should only be raising animals in "free-range" environments, where animals are allowed to roam freely instead of being kept in barns or cages.

Sometimes, "free-range" environments can encourage more disease and other problems. We should look instead to provide open and safe housing that encourages natural behaviours but also protects food safety and hygiene.

Animals are necessary as a food supply and products that we need. However, we should always have the humane care of these animals as our first priority.

Confinement of animals, even short periods that may occur during transportation, should be banned. Animals that are confined have inappropriate social contact, an inability to exercise and increased stress levels.

Animal science should focus on the effects of human behaviour. Inappropriate handling during livestock animal production and slaughter can cause fear, stress and physical trauma. It can affect ease of handling, reproductive performance, growth, productivity, health and meat quality. Inappropriate handling of companion animals causes fear, stress and behavioural problems.

Animal science should help us find ways to more efficiently house and manage animals and make the animals more productive for our needs.

Food safety and nutrition for people should always be the most important consideration and priority in raising livestock animals for food.

The link between animal welfare and health is supported by scientific evidence. Therefore, improvements in animal welfare can help make sure food production is safe and nutritious.

Companion pet owners should not be called or considered to be "owners." They should be called pet "guardians."

People are demanding to know how the animals they eat are being raised.

How many different opinions can you identify in the examples? Summarize at least four different opinions below. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with each opinion and why.

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