



## LIVESTOCK 2040

# Responsible care of livestock

The production of livestock, from cattle and sheep to pigs and poultry, is a major industry in Alberta. Livestock producers and animal industries often work together to establish practices that ensure these animals receive humane treatment throughout their lives. Many people are involved in livestock production, with jobs that range from farmers, producers, feedlot operators and transport truck drivers to veterinarians, animal care technicians or farm managers.

There are many benefits and choices that come from a career in the livestock industry. Producers contribute to the economic growth of the province and their communities. However, producers must also consider the impact of their industry on the environment, their economic and social quality of life and the health and safety of the animals.

*All livestock owners, producers and caregivers are responsible for the humane care of their animals.*



## PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL ANIMAL PROTECTION LAWS

All Canadian provinces and territories have animal protection laws. These laws deal with animal welfare issues and protection. However, they vary in a number of ways:

- The level of protection they provide for animals
- The issues that are addressed
- The degree to which the laws are enforced
- Who is responsible for enforcing the laws.

Animal protection is also covered by the animal cruelty section of Canada's *Criminal Code*. In some provinces or territories, these laws overlap. Some offenses that are illegal in provincial and territorial laws are also criminal in the *Criminal Code*. This means that enforcement officials can lay charges under provincial or territorial law, the *Criminal Code*, or both.



### LINK

The Alberta SPCA provides contact information for reporting animal neglect and abuse.

- Outside Calgary and Edmonton, call the Alberta SPCA at 1-800-455-9003
- In Calgary, call the Calgary Humane Society at 403-205-4455
- In Edmonton, call the Edmonton Humane Society at 780-491-3517



### LINK

A farm animal welfare resource centre, called [LivestockWelfare.com](http://LivestockWelfare.com), provides information about animal welfare issues and the care and handling of farm animals. Access this website at [www.livestockwelfare.com](http://www.livestockwelfare.com).



### DO YOU KNOW

that animal care and welfare standards, Codes of Practice and legislation cover aspects of care and handling for several livestock species.

These standards, guidelines and codes apply to livestock producers, as well as any individuals who raise livestock in individual contexts or hobby farm settings. They also apply to any settings in which animals are handled, including feedlots and slaughtering establishments.

You may need to be familiar with several Codes of Practice to fully understand your responsibilities in managing, transporting and marketing your livestock.

## ENFORCEMENT IN ALBERTA

The Alberta SPCA's Peace Officers are entrusted with the enforcement of the *Animal Protection Act* and other legislation involving the welfare of livestock and companion animals in rural areas throughout Alberta. In response to reports of suspected animal abuse and neglect, Peace Officers travel throughout the province to help ensure that all animals are treated humanely.

### Inspections

Peace Officers conduct inspections at auction markets, riding stables, kennels, rodeos and other animal holding and handling facilities.

## Investigating Abuse

The Alberta SPCA relies on the public to let them know about any domestic animal abuse or neglect. Alberta SPCA Peace Officers investigate all complaints received about animals in distress. The *Animal Protection Act* requires there to be reasonable and probable grounds to believe there may be an offence. A call from a witness or neighbour provides such grounds for investigation.



### DO YOU KNOW

In addition to federal and provincial laws, voluntary Codes of Practice are a series of nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different types of farm animals. The Codes cover housing and management practices for animals on farms as well as best practices for their transportation and processing.

**The Codes are not legislated; they are voluntary. They contain requirements from current legislation. They also contain recommendations to help farmers and others in the agriculture and food sector understand requirements for different aspects of animal care and practise sound animal husbandry.**

Examples from different Codes of Practice are referenced on many of the **Need to Know** cards on the *Virtual Apprentice 2040* website.



### LINK

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle and the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep have both been reviewed and revised in 2013. The Code development process, supporting scientific research and each Code can be accessed on the National Farm Animal Care Council website at [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle) and [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep).

## What does the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle say about duty of care?

All herd sizes require adequate human resources to ensure proper care and well-being of the animals. Everyone handling cattle should be familiar with their normal behaviour and should use low stress, behaviour-based cattle handling techniques. The selection and training of personnel are the most important factors in ensuring that cattle will be managed humanely. All personnel working with cattle or managing cattle facilities should be experienced or properly trained regarding humane handling, equipment use and livestock care. They should understand their responsibilities and ensure that routine cattle management practices promote animal well-being and avoid unnecessary suffering of cattle.

Calm, healthy cattle have higher productivity and economic value than stressed or ill cattle. However, an equal standard of humane treatment must be provided to cattle that have less economic value (e.g., cull cows, downers and chronically ill cattle).

The Canadian beef industry involves seedstock and cow-calf producers, backgrounding and feedlot operations, transporters, sale yards and assembly stations, veterinarians and packing plants operating under diverse climatic and geographical conditions. Cattle care is practised all along the production chain and the well-being of beef cattle can be safeguarded under a variety of husbandry and management systems....

Most husbandry systems impose restrictions on some freedoms of cattle. However, producers should consider the following:

- Shelter for protection and comfort
- Feed and water to maintain optimal health
- Freedom of movement, exercise, and opportunity to express most normal behaviours
- Company of herd mates
- Footing that reduces the risk of slipping
- Disease prevention and control
- Veterinary care, diagnosis, and treatment
- Freedom from unnecessary pain and discomfort
- Emergency preparedness for fire, mechanical breakdowns, and the disruption of feed supplies.



## What does the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep say about duty of care?

In Canada, a number of sheep breeds and their crosses are managed under a variety of systems appropriate to the type of sheep, topography, local climate and resources available to the producer. These systems include, but are not limited to, range grazing, brush grazing, pasture grazing, total confinement, seasonal confinement, hybrid yarding, feed lot and dairy. There are a number of federal, provincial/territorial and municipal regulations across the country that affect sheep farming. Producers must be aware of and abide by these regulations.

Appropriate husbandry, handling and management are essential for the health and well-being of sheep. The Sheep Code of Practice provides guidance to owners and employees for the welfare of sheep in their care. Owners and attendants must collectively possess the ability, knowledge and competence necessary to maintain the health and welfare of their sheep in accordance with this Code. Key knowledge required would include an understanding of the basic needs and behaviour of sheep, along with farm protocols and processes. All people working with sheep must have access to a copy of this Code....

Most husbandry systems impose some restrictions on the freedoms of sheep. However, sheep production should promote good welfare and should not cause unnecessary discomfort or distress. Producers should consider the following:

- Company of flock mates
- Emergency preparedness for fire, extreme weather events, mechanical failure, electrical failure, feed supply/access issues

- Feed and water to maintain health and vigour
- Flock health management system that includes veterinary care, disease prevention and control strategies and timely individual care
- Freedom of movement and exercise for normal behaviour
- Handling and conditions to avoid pain, fear and stress
- Neonatal care of lambs
- No unnecessary surgical alterations
- Predator and pest control
- Shelter.

Whenever the use of technology increases on the farm, consideration should be given to its effect on animal welfare. Automation often controls temperature, ventilation, handling and feed and water supply.

All flock sizes require adequate human resources to ensure attentive observation, care and the welfare of individual animals. There must be adequate staff and time to inspect, service and maintain all necessary equipment for routine care of the sheep.

Resources and facilities must be available to ensure consistent access to feed and water, appropriate shelter for the sheep, and disease prevention or treatment. Sick, injured or distressed animals must receive prompt and appropriate attention, treatment, nursing care or be euthanized, regardless of cost. 🐾🐾

Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (©2013) have been used with permission, Canadian Cattlemen's Association and National Farm Animal Care Council. [www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/beef\\_code\\_of\\_practice.pdf](http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/beef_code_of_practice.pdf)

Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (©2013) have been used with permission, Canadian Sheep Federation and National Farm Animal Care Council. [www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/sheep\\_code\\_of\\_practice.pdf](http://www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/sheep_code_of_practice.pdf)

The process for the development of updated Codes can be accessed through the National Farm Animal Care Council at [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice).

1. What is the primary purpose of the Codes of Practice?

2. What do you think are two of the most important responsibilities of livestock producers or those involved in the care of these animals?

3. How can the Codes of Practice help ensure that you meet those responsibilities? When do you think the Codes should be consulted?

4. Each Code of Practice provides a statement on the responsibilities of ownership. How do the statements from these two codes compare? Identify at least **one** similarity and **one** difference.