

Canadian Funding Policy for Farm Animal Welfare: A Step Behind the World

Farm Animal Welfare Report Card

Country	Grade	Comments
Great Britain	A	
Australia	B	
New Zealand	B	
United States	C-	
Canada	D	Shameful

**Canadians care about farm animal welfare
Why doesn't our government?**

A Report from the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies



Canadian Funding Policy for Farm Animal Welfare: A Step Behind the World

Synopsis

On April 1, 2009, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) started to roll out its *Growing Forward* Framework Agreement, which sets the policy framework for public funding for agriculture over the next five years. The strategy for this program is largely set by the Federal government and provinces have signed on to receive federal funding. Agriculture in Canada is a joint Federal-Provincial responsibility.

This was the perfect opportunity to put farm animal welfare on the government's agenda. Instead, the government has ignored all input from the animal welfare perspective and is proceeding with a framework that will accomplish nothing to address animal welfare in Canada, especially farm animal welfare. In fact, the framework includes no provision, strategy nor plan to fund animal welfare. This is unacceptable.

What is Animal Welfare

Animal welfare - means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if it is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear, and distress. Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane transportation and slaughter/killing. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment. (*World Organisation for Animal Health, 2008*)

Why Should the Government accept responsibility for Farm Animal Welfare?

- Agriculture and feeding the nation are important concerns for Canadians and for their governments, and support of Agriculture has always been recognized as a "Public Good".
- Animal welfare is a civic responsibility that the government must oversee, as is environmental protection.
- Animal health and welfare are intrinsically linked. Owners' responsibilities go beyond simply keeping animals disease free.
- Other countries are responding to well-reasoned public interest and moving forward with animal welfare strategies, leaving Canada farther behind and less competitive in international markets.
- Welfare issues are important to consumers. Canadians feel it is important to treat farm animals humanely (96%). Specifically, two-thirds (68%) of Canadians feel that it is extremely or very important for farm animals to be treated humanely, and the additional 28% feel it's important or somewhat important. *

- Most Canadians (82%) think it's at least somewhat important to buy cage-free meat and eggs in their local grocery store or supermarket, and almost half of Canadians (45%) feel it is extremely or very important. *
- Two-in-five (42%) Canadians have purchased food products labeled as 'certified organic'; one-third (35%) have purchased cage-free, free-range, or free-run eggs; one-third (34%) have purchased free-range meat or poultry; and one-quarter (26%) have reduced the amount of meat or poultry they consume. *
- If Canada is not proactive, consumer pressure and animal rights groups may force industry to make change, which would likely result in a splintered and inadequate system much like in the United States.

* The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Harris/Decima data, national survey of Canadian attitudes toward farm animal transport

Where is the Canadian Government Failing the Animals and Consumers?

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will not accept their responsibility for animal welfare - there is **no** policy framework to address animal welfare and **no** provision for ongoing government funding for animal welfare.
- This lack of responsibility is reflected in the limited regulatory framework to address the welfare of animals and inadequate enforcement of existing regulations.
- The government refuses to provide even \$100,000 a year for the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC), an organization with a mandate to provide a national coordinated approach promoting responsible farm animal care – a fairly modest animal care initiative.
- This national public interest organization has been struggling, at the same time as the federal government has unilaterally funded the Canadian Swine Health Board¹ and has put millions of dollars into the hog industry.
- In stark contrast to the government's lack of funding for farm animal welfare, the government has, for decades, provided substantial funding to the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), which is the national agency responsible for setting and maintaining standards for the care and use of animals used in research, teaching and testing throughout Canada.
- Past and present actions indicate government prefers to leave it to industry to address animal welfare issues, which is an inadequate and biased approach unless done in close collaboration with animal welfare experts and a strong government committed to improving the welfare of farm animals in Canada.

¹ Corporations Canada Letters Patent (CCA-Part II) 449889-5 CANADIAN SWINE HEALTH BOARD, CONSEIL POUR LA PROTECTION DE LA SANTE PORCINE AU CANADA OTTAWA, Ontario 2008-11-18

What do Other Countries Have That Canada Does Not?

- The recognition of animal welfare as a priority and a civic responsibility, as well as proper enforcement of minimal standards of animal welfare.
- Permanent and government-funded animal welfare advisory committees comprised of a well-balanced membership that advise government on animal welfare issues.
- All-encompassing animal welfare strategies and legislation that are regularly reviewed and updated – protecting all types of animals.
- Government-funded and empowered enforcement agencies to ensure animal welfare standards are met.
- Plans to cost-share implementation of animal welfare strategies between industry and government to achieve better management of animal disease risks so overall risks and costs are reduced.

Who is the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies?

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) is an animal welfare organization, not an animal rights organization. Some animal rights advocates believe animals and humans are equal and oppose the use of all animals, no matter how humane, including the use of animals for food.

The animal welfare philosophy - our philosophy - reflects the values of the majority of Canadians. We promote the responsible and humane treatment and use of animals. The CFHS is an animal welfare organization that works to improve the welfare of companion, farm, research and wild animals. We speak on behalf of more than 100 member humane societies and branches across Canada.

A Global Perspective of Animal Welfare

Animal welfare was identified as a top priority by the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) in their 2001- 2005 annual report, affirming that animal welfare is a key component of animal health. Canada is a signatory member of this organization. Since then the OIE has had a committee on animal welfare and is developing its own animal welfare standards that may impact trade with other countries. To date they have developed guidelines for transportation, slaughter and killing for disease control purposes. They will be crafting standards for on-farm production practices and housing systems as well. Obviously, incorporating animal welfare standards will give countries a competitive advantage.

In the European Union (EU), growing public awareness means that, together with food safety and environmental pollution, animal welfare now plays a major role in all discussions about animal production. With its Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010, the EU is forging ahead. Their goals include: upgrading minimum standards for animal welfare, promoting research and alternative approaches to animal testing, introducing standardized animal welfare indicators, better informing animal handlers and the general public on animal welfare issues, and supporting international initiatives for the protection of animals.

The EU's Welfare Quality Project (with a budget of over \$23 million CAD) goals include:

- Developing practical strategies/measures to improve animal welfare
- Developing a European on-farm welfare assessment standard
- Developing a European animal welfare information standard
- Integrating and interrelating the most appropriate specialist expertise in the multidisciplinary field of animal welfare in Europe

The Welfare Quality Project endeavors to accommodate societal concerns and market demands, to develop reliable on-farm monitoring systems, product information systems, and practical species-specific strategies to improve animal welfare. The research program is designed to develop European standards for on-farm welfare assessment and product information systems as well as practical strategies for improving animal welfare. The standards for on-farm welfare assessment and information systems will be based upon consumer demands, the marketing requirements of retailers and stringent scientific validation. Forty-four institutes and universities (representing thirteen European countries and four Latin American countries) with specialist expertise are participating in this research project.

http://www.oie.int/eng/bien_etre/en_introduction.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/index_en.htm

<http://www.welfarequality.net/everyone/26559/7/0/22>

Great Britain

Great Britain has long been considered a leader in animal welfare. Not only does Great Britain have numerous pieces of legislation affecting farm animal production, they also have voluntary Codes of Recommendation. The Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible for animal welfare regulations and enforcement, but they don't do this on their own. The Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) is an independent advisory committee that counsels DEFRA on policy concerns.

FAWC's 2006 to 2010 strategic plan identifies three priorities for the Council:

- Economics of farm animal welfare
- Communication of knowledge about farm animal welfare
- Animal welfare and disease

The globalization of the food supply and power of retailers are two factors that are important to FAWC as they examine the economics of farm animal welfare.

Great Britain's Animal Health and Welfare Strategy was launched in 2004 and encompasses all animals kept for pleasure or profit - pets, livestock, game and wildlife where it impacts on kept animals. The strategy's vision by 2014 is:

- Animals in Great Britain kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos are healthy and treated humanely
- Disease status is amongst the highest in the world, and Great Britain is able to trade animals and animal products internationally
- The costs of livestock health and welfare are appropriately balanced between industry, and the taxpayer
- All disease emergencies are dealt with swiftly and effectively using an agreed approach

- Consumers value the confidence they have in food produced safely from healthy animals that are well cared for. Consumers and retailers accept that higher standards of animal health and welfare are not cost-free
- Livestock keeping is part of a competitive British farming industry which succeeds by meeting the needs of consumers at home and abroad, producing food safely and to high standards of health and welfare

DEFRA also has a contract with an agricultural consultancy to run an advisory program for farmers to encourage good welfare. This is free to farmers and includes workshops and meetings throughout the country on animal welfare topics.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/default.htm>

<http://www.fawc.org.uk/>

Australia

Similar to Canada's provinces, Australia's states and territories have differing levels of animal welfare legislation. The Australian government has invested \$6 million over four years in a national Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS). It will guide the development of nationally consistent policies and enhance existing animal welfare regulations in all states and territories.

The Strategy covers the humane treatment of all animals including:

- Livestock/production animals
- Animals used for work, sport, recreation or display
- Companion animals
- Animals in the wild
- Aquatic animals
- Animals used in research and for teaching purposes

It took the Australian government - with assistance from the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW), in consultation with state and territory governments, animal industry organizations, animal welfare groups and the general public - five years to develop the AAWS. It is based on science as well as social and economic considerations.

The NCCAW is an advisory committee to the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, with the following terms of reference:

- Assess and advise the Commonwealth Government on the implications of issues and developments affecting the welfare of animals.
- Advise on the relevance and effectiveness of existing and possible future Australian animal welfare arrangements including policies, regulation, codes of practice and guidelines.
- Liaise with the AAWS Advisory Committee and report to the Minister on the implementation of the Strategy.
- Liaise with other relevant bodies, including Animal Welfare Working Group and Animal Health Group.

In its efforts to position itself as a world leader in animal welfare, the Australian government has invested \$6 million over four years to the AAWS. It is important to note Australia moved forward with a national animal welfare strategy despite challenges with state and territorial legislation -

the same challenges faced in Canada. They realized animal welfare is a growing international issue needing a proactive rather than reactive approach.

<http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare>

<http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/welfare/nccaw>

New Zealand

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) Animal Welfare Group is responsible for animal welfare legislation and enforcement of such. They emphasize a consultative approach to animal welfare issues in developing sound, science-based policy and standards. MAF has two main advisory committees, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee.

The National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee advises the Minister of Agriculture on any matter relating to the welfare of animals in New Zealand and makes recommendations to the Minister on various animal welfare issues including codes of welfare, guidelines for traps and hunting and classifying surgical procedures such as ear cropping and tail docking in dogs to be prohibited or restricted.

The Animal Welfare Act of 1999 includes all animals – companion, livestock, animals used for recreation or display and animals used in research. The existing quality assurance programs, put in place by producers and industry associations, fit in well with the Act. The Act lists the following functions for the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee:

- Advising the Minister of Agriculture on ethical and animal welfare issues arising from research, testing and teaching
- Providing advice and information on the development and review of codes of ethical conduct, as well as making recommendations about the approval, amendment, suspension or revocation of such codes
- Providing information and advice to animal ethics committees – making recommendations on the appointment of accredited reviewers
- Considering the reports of independent reviews of code holders and animal ethics committees
- Making recommendations about the manipulation of apes, chimpanzees and orangutans – making recommendations on the approval of research or testing in the national interest

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/animal-welfare>

Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand have achieved high marks in farm animal welfare because they are being proactive. They have national animal welfare strategies that include all animals, fund animal welfare initiatives, consult with stakeholders and update strategies on an on-going basis.

United States

The United States does not have a national farm animal welfare strategy. Legislation addressing animal cruelty and care varies among states.

The United States is a perfect example of what happens when a government ignores animal welfare, leaving industry and consumer groups to react to concerns about animal welfare. Consumer pressure, along with campaigns by animal activist groups, were the driving force behind the retail industry in the US implementing animal welfare guidelines and third party audits amongst their suppliers. This began with McDonalds, then Burger King and Wendy's. The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and National Council of Chain Restaurants (NCCR) have since been developing and implementing industry wide standards and auditing systems for farm animal care.

These standards were set at a retail level but, unfortunately, not all relevant organizations and industries were included in the process.

It is vital that all parties be involved to ensure the programs are logistically and economically viable for everyone. Otherwise a system is created that may not be feasible for all parties.

The challenges the U.S. faces as a result of this approach include:

- Different restaurants have different standards making it more challenging and confusing for producers who could have to go through several different audits from various restaurant chains
- Process does not include all producers – not everyone produces for the retail chain, plus not everyone requests an audit
- Not all groups have bought into the process resulting in some rejecting this system

This all leads to a complete lack of consistency and confusion for the public and the producers. There are no over-reaching standards for animal welfare, therefore labeling and pass/fail of audits become relatively meaningless.

Because there was no federal leadership when the U.S. was responding to public pressure regarding farm animal welfare, the result was a patchwork of state and industry initiatives. The effort needed to overcome and correct this, after the fact, is astronomical. A more cost effective and efficient way to manage farm animal welfare is to approach it from a federal perspective to begin with.

http://awic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=3&tax_level=1&tax_subject=186

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/index.shtml

<http://www.fmi.org/about/>

Despite their system flaws, the United States has received a slightly higher grade than Canada because the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Inspection Service demonstrates animal welfare is a priority by placing its Animal Welfare Information Center prominently on their website.

When you visit Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, animal welfare isn't part of any menu or sub-menu. You have to search for information. If you want to learn about pari-mutuel betting on horse races, however, it's just two clicks of the mouse.

Canada

The Canadian government's response to animal welfare has been indifferent at best and shameful at worst.

It took almost 10 years to implement changes to the Animal Cruelty Sections of the Criminal Code of Canada, and in the end the amendments passed in 2008 only increased the penalties, leaving the offences inadequate to protect all animals from cruelty and abuse. Animals continue to suffer under the archaic legislation originally enacted in 1892.

It is commendable that the federal government continues to provide significant funding to the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), which oversees the use of animals in research, testing and teaching, and provides input on welfare issues involving such animals. **Yet, this same government can't agree to continue funding the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) an industry-dominated organization committed to responsible farm animal care.**

Growing Forward

According to the federal government, "*Growing Forward* is a new commitment to Canada's agriculture sector that's focused on achieving results, reflects input from across the sector, and will deliver programs that are simpler, more effective and tailored to local needs." Governments are investing \$1.3 billion over five years in Growing Forward programs.

One of the key priority areas for *Growing Forward* is:

"What matters to Canadians: Governments will take on a greater leadership role on key issues so that the sector can contribute to the continued good health and wellness of Canadians and to a vibrant and a healthy environment through improved environment and food safety programs." (*Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website*)

The public, media and industry all share an interest in animal welfare. The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) submitted extensive comments and suggestions to the government to improve farm animal welfare. Yet the only mention of animal care in the Growing Forward report of July 2007 is "Enabling the sector to respond to increasing consumer demand for food produced in a manner that is environmentally responsible and that considers animal care." This passing mention of animal care falls far short of our expectations and those of Canadians. It is disgraceful.

Farm animal welfare is a "Key Issue" to Canadians and we expect our national government bodies such as AAFC to be leaders in animal welfare as promised.

The government appears content to allow industry to self-regulate with voluntary standards – that's all. This leads to a lack of consistency across provinces and industries, little or no verification that standards are actually being met and will not reassure consumers – nor will it improve the welfare of animals.

The NFACC has recently established a draft code development process, which is supported by the CFHS and is an improvement over the previous process. However, voluntary Recommended Codes of Practice are not enough to ensure good animal welfare. A verification component is crucial to ensure the codes are being followed.

<http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1200339470715&lang=eng>

<http://www.nfacc.ca/AboutNFACC.aspx>

http://www.ccac.ca/en/About_CCAC/About_CCAC_Intro.htm

Canada has received a failing grade because of its almost complete disregard for animal welfare.

What Canada Needs – Recommendations from the CFHS

A Federal framework that enables government to address animal health and welfare

- A funding pillar specifically for animal welfare
- A specific policy framework for addressing animal welfare with significant ongoing funding
- A comprehensive, national strategy for animal health and welfare – similar to what exists in Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand
- A secretary of state for animal welfare to address animal welfare at the political level across relevant government departments
- A cooperative approach between federal and provincial/territorial governments to specifically address farm animal welfare, but also companion animals and wildlife
- An Animal Welfare Advisory Committee with a well-balanced membership (not industry-dominated) to advise the Minister and the department of Agriculture on animal welfare issues, including policies, codes, verification programs and legislative matters
- Continued funding for the National Farm Animal Care Council

Recommended Codes of Practice and their Verification

- A system of voluntary codes of practice without a process to verify whether producers are adhering to them is completely inadequate. A funding program both to establish a framework for animal care verification programs and to assist commodity groups and producers in implementing such programs. Verification programs should ensure an acceptable level of on-farm animal care. Overseeing the code development and verification process would be an important responsibility of an Animal Welfare Advisory Committee with the support and partnership of the NFACC.

Farm Animal Welfare Research

- Canada needs a comprehensive process to identify, facilitate and financially support farm animal health and welfare research, and the implementation of that research. This should be an important function of a government-funded Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

Transitioning to New Systems

- Funding should be available to assist producers with phasing out intensive housing systems and transitioning to more animal welfare friendly husbandry methods.

Enforcement

- Enhanced funding for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is needed to improve enforcement of transportation and slaughter regulations. More inspectors are needed to monitor the welfare of animals at slaughter and during transport.
- Joint funding is also required at the provincial/territorial level for enforcement of various animal protection regulations including animal cruelty, provincial transportation, meat inspection, sales or auction barns, and the methods of production for meat and animal products, etc.

Organic Animal Agriculture and Other Niche Markets

- The government should extend similar support to organic farmers and others meeting niche markets such as free-range eggs and SPCA certified, as they currently provide to mainstream producers.

Foreign Animal Disease

- Animal welfare implications of a foreign animal disease outbreak need more government attention. When mass killing is urgently required it can be challenging to ensure human safety as well as meeting animal welfare concerns. Ongoing research is required to explore improved methods for mass killing of various species.
- Substantial animal welfare concerns also result from border closures, movement restrictions or market conditions that are often caused by foreign animal disease outbreaks or the threat of such outbreaks. Governments and partners need to include such issues in emergency and disaster planning. This would be another function of an Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

In Summary

In recent years, animal welfare has garnered an increasingly higher profile on the global front and is emerging as a critical trade issue. It is clear that Canada is falling significantly behind other developed countries that are taking animal welfare far more seriously. It is time for the government to step up and make animal welfare a priority.