



NATIONAL FARM ANIMAL CARE COUNCIL
CONSEIL NATIONAL POUR LES SOINS AUX ANIMAUX D'ÉLEVAGE



Market Relevant Codes and Communication Leadership

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT

Year Two (April 2015 - March 2016)

Canada 

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NFACC partners

Agriculture and Agri-Food Portfolio (AAFC, CFIA)
Alberta Farm Animal Care Association
British Columbia Farm Animal Care Council
Canada Fox Breeders Association
Canada Mink Breeders Association
Canadian Bison Association
Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
Canadian Hatching Egg Producers
Canadian Meat Council
Canadian Pork Council
Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council
Canadian Sheep Federation
Canadian Veal Association
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
Chicken Farmers of Canada
Dairy Farmers of Canada
Dairy Processors Association of Canada
Egg Farmers of Canada
Equine Canada
Farm & Food Care Ontario
Farm & Food Care Saskatchewan
Ontario Trucking Association
(Livestock Transporters' Division)
Provincial Ministries of Agriculture
(currently represented by Ontario)
Retail Council of Canada
Coalition of provincial SPCAs (ON, SK, BC)
Turkey Farmers of Canada
World Animal Protection

Associate Members

A & W Food Services of Canada Inc.
Boehringer Ingelheim, Canada
Burnbrae Farms
Cargill Canada
Elanco Animal Health, Canada
Loblaw Companies Ltd.
Manitoba Pork Council
Maple Leaf
McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd.
Saputo Inc.
Sobeys Inc.
Tim Hortons

Raising the bar in farm animal care

Driving progress through teamwork and collective leadership

The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) is championing progress on farm animal care and welfare through collaborative processes that build trust. This important issue has the potential to shape the future of our agriculture and food systems.

Farm animal welfare is something many Canadians, from farmers to consumers, care deeply about. Responsible animal care and welfare is about doing right by the animals. It's also about supporting a culture of continual improvement – based on new advancements in science and knowledge, as well as shifts in evolving societal expectations – to keep us forward-looking, strong and sustainable.

There is growing recognition of Canada's progress in addressing farm animal care and welfare. This speaks to the many years of practical results that have been delivered through the nationally coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach facilitated by NFACC.

Inclusive multi-stakeholder approach

This approach is unique in the world as NFACC stands as the only organization of its kind that brings together farmers, industry, animal welfare groups, veterinarians and scientific experts, enforcement and government, in a model of collaborative, consensus-based decision-making. The NFACC framework also features processes that include broad public consultation.

Everyone has an opportunity to share knowledge and provide input. This helps ensure the best, most informed decisions are made in the collective interests of all involved, including farm animals across livestock species and industry sectors.

Building on strengths

During 2015-2016, progress continued through the "Market Relevant Codes and Communication Leadership" project under Growing Forward 2.

Major advancements were made on five Code of Practice updates, including Codes for hatching eggs, breeders, chickens and turkeys; poultry (layers); rabbits; bison; and veal cattle. Industry groups have also taken important steps in the development and use of Animal Care Assessment Programs, based on the NFACC Animal Care Assessment Framework. NFACC has also experienced a milestone year in continuing to attract and add new members, bringing further diversity and strength to the organization.

Collaborative process drives results

As NFACC moves forward, the potential for further progress continues to depend on ongoing commitment and buy-in to this collaborative and pre-competitive process. We continue to see that the pace of progress is much faster and our efforts are more effective when we pull in the same direction and keep on the same page each step of the way. This is the approach we will continue to encourage among everyone involved. This is essential not only to NFACC but also to Canada's ability to maintain and build on our hard earned accomplishments and growing leadership position in farm animal welfare, for many years to come.



Ryder Lee
NFACC Chairman

Leadership through Codes of Practice

National guidelines for the care and handling of farm animals

The centerpiece of Canada’s approach to farm animal care and welfare is the development of Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals.

The Codes of Practice are guidelines that serve as Canada’s national understanding of farm animal care requirements and recommended practices.

The development of these Codes is coordinated by NFACC through a multi-stakeholder process. Each Code of Practice is devoted to a particular species of farm animal and collectively the Codes cover most types of livestock and poultry raised on farms across Canada.

The Codes serve as important reference documents for all stakeholders. In practical terms, they serve as an on-farm tool to support the everyday application of best practices for animal care and welfare.

“ One of the biggest challenges in developing standards is that everyone has different views about what is important for good animal welfare. The Code Development Process bridges these differences by creating an environment for diverse perspectives to come together and build consensus.

- David Fraser
Professor, Animal Welfare Program, UBC

The process of developing updated Codes of Practice involves a number of steps designed to ensure that each Code is scientifically informed, practical and reflects society’s expectations of responsible farm animal care.

1. The Code development process is initiated when the national lead for a farm animal industry expresses to NFACC its commitment to update a Code. The next step is to secure funding and other resources.
2. A Code Development Committee is established, which includes farmers, animal welfare organizations, the veterinary community, animal welfare researchers, government, processors, food companies, and others - all working together in collaboration and toward consensus.
3. Top scientific experts are assembled to conduct a scientific literature review of priority welfare issues to be covered by a Code, with findings provided to assist Code Development Committee deliberations.
4. The Code Development Committee then deliberates on the content of the draft Code. Working together, committee members identify evidence-based solutions that address farm animal care concerns, meet market needs and are implementable by farmers.
5. The next step is the launch of a 60-day public comment period. This serves a critical role in supporting robust Codes of Practice with everyone encouraged to take part and provide input.
6. The committee carefully considers all of the input and viewpoints gathered during the public comment period and agrees on the final version of the Code.
7. Finally, the revised Code is submitted to NFACC, published, and industry begins the process of outreach and implementation.

Two types of guidance

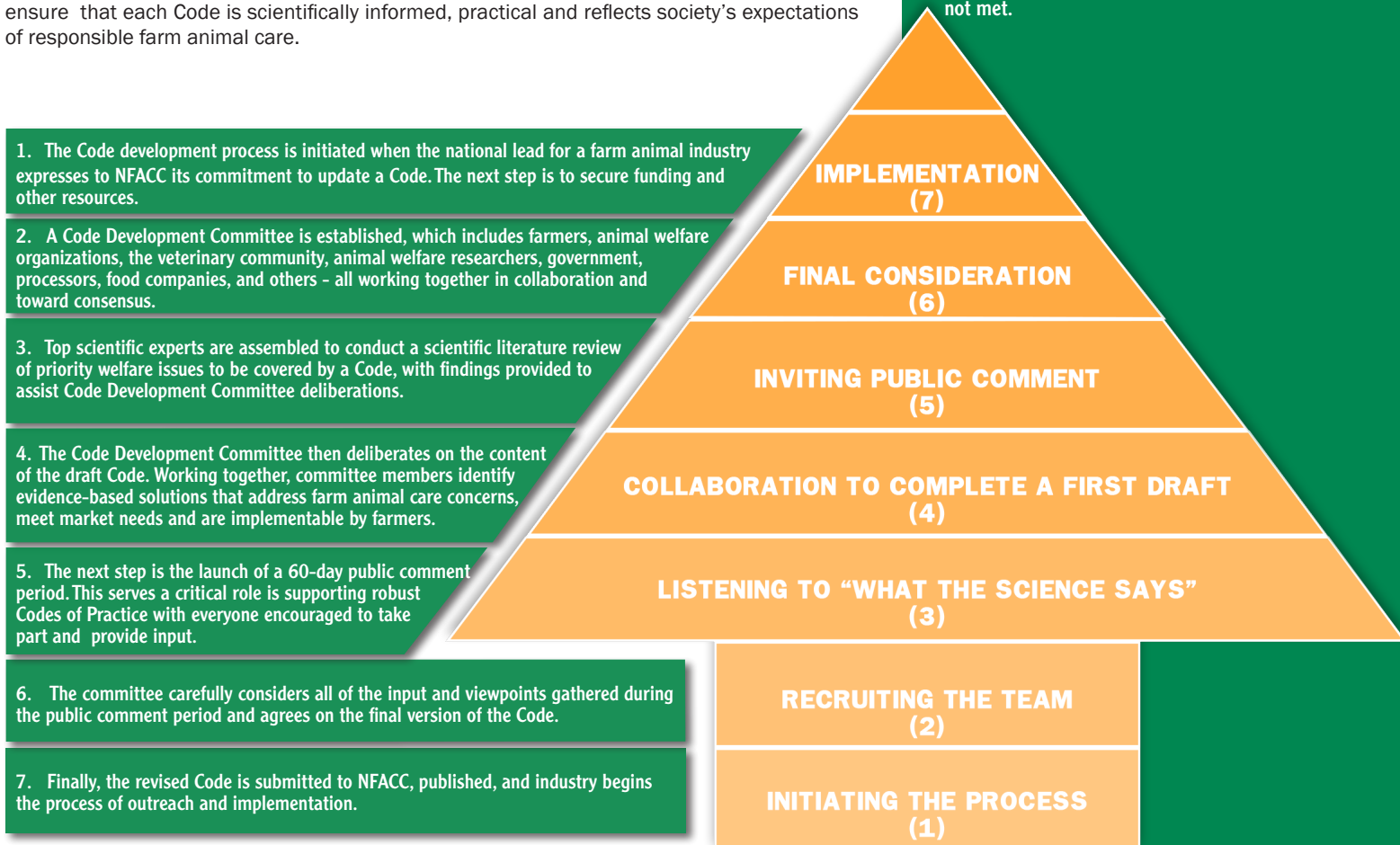
Each Code of Practice includes both requirements and recommended practices, with important differences between the two and what they mean for producers and others who utilize the Codes.

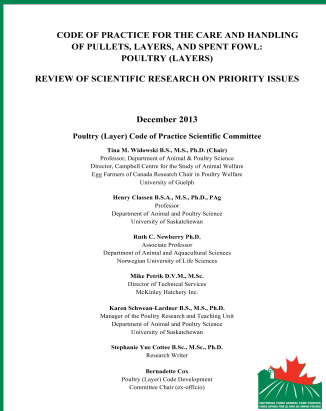
Requirements

These refer to either a regulatory requirement, or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices and are fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals. Requirements represent a consensus position that these measures, at minimum, are to be implemented by all persons responsible for farm animal care. When included as part of an assessment program, those who fail to implement Requirements may be compelled by industry associations to undertake corrective measures, or risk a loss of market options. Requirements also may be enforceable under federal and provincial regulation.

Recommended Practices

Code Recommended Practices may complement a Code’s Requirements, promote producer education and can encourage adoption of practices for continuous improvement in animal welfare outcomes. Recommended Practices are those which are generally expected to enhance animal welfare outcomes, but failure to implement them does not imply that acceptable standards of animal care are not met.





Canada's Advantage

Leading scientific expertise

Canada boasts a wealth of leading scientific expertise on farm animal welfare – an invaluable asset to the Code development process.

There are many outstanding people who have contributed. Two examples are Dr. Tina Widowski of University of Guelph and Dr. Jeffrey Rushen of the University of British Columbia.

Dr. Tina Widowski, a professor of animal biosciences, is the Director of the Campbell Centre for the Study of Animal Welfare and the Egg Farmers of Canada Research Chair in Poultry Welfare. Her research career has focused primarily on pigs and poultry. Widowski has served on Scientific Committees for the pig Code and the chickens, turkeys and breeders Code. She has also served as Chair of the Scientific Committee for the poultry (layers) Code.



Dr. Jeffrey Rushen is an adjunct professor and researcher in animal behavior and welfare, with many years of experience across species and now focused primarily on dairy animals. He represents the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies on the veal cattle Code development committee. He has also served as co-chair of the Scientific Committee and member of the Code development committee for the Dairy Code. Rushen has written over 100 scientific articles on animal welfare and authored or co-authored several book chapters on this topic.



Both Widowski and Rushen are considered top farm animal welfare experts. Their contributions to NFACC have involved countless hours and have played a critical role in helping Canada utilize its home-based scientific expertise.

Critical role of Scientific Committee

Supporting sound, science-informed decision-making

The participation of expert Scientific Committees supports Codes that are scientifically informed.

A Scientific Committee is established early in the development process for each Code, selecting leading scientific experts familiar with research on the care and management of the animals under consideration.

This provides an opportunity to draw upon Canada's wealth of scientific expertise – a tremendous resource and among the best in the world. Where needed and beneficial, expertise from outside of the country is also secured to contribute.

The primary task of the Scientific Committee is to review the scientific literature in relation to priority animal welfare issues to be covered by the Code and to prepare a report based on this review for use by the Code Development Committee.

Three concepts of animal welfare

In developing its report, the Scientific Committee provides an assessment based upon three general overlapping concepts of animal welfare, including:

- Biological functioning (including health and productivity)
- How the animal “feels” (including measures of pain and preferences)
- Naturalness (including the animal's ability to perform behaviors that are important).

The aim is to bridge these three distinct but overlapping viewpoints of welfare. The aim is to find a balance that addresses each in a manner that is achievable, sustainable and sets us on a path of continual improvement.

By balancing all three, each Scientific Committee report delivers a broad view of welfare that offers a rich resource to support the Code development process.

Conclusions not recommendations

Each Scientific Committee report provides scientific conclusions but not recommendations. This is based on the principle that “Science can tell us what is . . . but not what ought to be.” Animal welfare is all about the ethical concerns related to how we ought to treat animals. The ‘ought to be’ deliberations are the task of the Code Development Committee.



Webinars featuring thought leaders in animal welfare

NFACC highlights Canada's expertise in farm animal welfare by supporting webinars that provide engaging and accessible knowledge transfer to stakeholders.

In one recent example, the University of British Columbia's Dr. David Fraser spoke on “A Professional Model for Animal Agriculture to Secure Animal Welfare and Build Public Trust.”

A professor in the Animal Welfare Program at UBC, Fraser's track record includes a 43 year research career and long-time service both domestically and internationally advising on progress in farm animal welfare.

Insights on ‘professionalizing’ animal production

“Animal welfare depends on so much more than just the physical environment,” observes Fraser on this topic. “It depends strongly on the quality of animal care that the animals receive. This in turn depends so much on the knowledge, skill and attentiveness of the producers and staff.”

“What we need is a system that rewards that high level of skill, knowledge, dedication and performance. I believe we need a continued shift in our thinking toward what I would call ‘professional animal production’ as the way forward on these issues.”

Access this webinar and others at www.youtube.com/c/NFACCcanada

Capturing the benefits of collaboration

Multi-stakeholder Code Development Committees lead the Code development process

Science is the foundation. From this foundation collaborative deliberations can occur regarding what is possible, how it is possible and when it is possible.

The broad spectrum of viewpoints on farm animal care and welfare can pose a formidable challenge to achieving consensus. For NFACC however, a strength and defining characteristic of the organization is that it has always viewed this reality as an opportunity for improved decision-making leading to more robust results. A unique collaborative framework supports innovation and novel solutions to animal welfare challenges.

For each Code of Practice the benefits of collaboration are championed through the multi-stakeholder Code Development Committees, which lead the Code development process.

Diversity makes for better decisions

These committees reflect the principle that “diversity makes for better decisions.”

“We believe that collaboration among diverse stakeholder groups is the key to real progress,” says Jackie Wepruk, General Manager of NFACC. “This is what we have seen. The value of diversity comes when we realize that each one of us has something to contribute in the area of animal welfare. One group’s knowledge can be true, even if it contradicts another group’s knowledge.”



Diversity enables us to shift from asking the question of which one of us is right when it comes to animal welfare, to what does animal welfare look like if each of us is right. It makes diversity a strength rather than an obstacle.



Collective reasoning for robust results

NFACC members support the concept that different viewpoints contribute to robust Codes. Decisions are scientifically informed, but ultimately the Codes reflect the collective judgment of the group. The consensus achieved by the Code Development Committees supports sustainable efforts and continual improvement in farm animal care and welfare. It is the blueprint for Canada’s approach.



Equine Code development committee



Public comments fuel Canada’s progress

Listening to Canadians

The NFACC Code development process includes a Public Comment Period to ensure everyone from farmers to consumers has the opportunity to have their say in the development of each Code.

“It is important that anyone who wishes to have a voice in this process has this opportunity,” says Robin Horel, Vice-Chair of NFACC. “The Public Comment Period is an important way to allow this and to gather valuable feedback that supports the Code development process. Every submission is reviewed and considered as part of the process.”

Feedback strengthens results

The Public Comment Period for each Code is 60 days, which balances the need to ensure stakeholders have time to provide quality feedback while also maintaining an efficient and manageable process. NFACC provides a multi-component communications effort to support awareness of the Public Comment Period and encourage participation.

A customized online comment system enables NFACC to collect and sort thousands of comments. The Code secretary reviews all submissions, organizes the data and presents it to the Code Development Committee for deliberations in preparing the final Code.

“It’s one thing to debate and find consensus within the room. We also need to encourage dialogue and input more broadly at the public level. This is why the Public Comment Period has been, and will continue to be, a critically important part of the process for Code development.”



– Geoff Urton, Senior Manager, Stakeholder Relations for the BC SPCA

The Codes in the news

NFACC has a strong commitment to communications to help keep all stakeholders informed of developments and activity. This includes participating in knowledge transfer that supports coverage of NFACC developments in important communications channels such as a range of media outlets.

A new page featured on the NFACC website is “NFACC in the News”, which provides a regularly updated round-up of links to media coverage of NFACC and the Codes.

Check out the new page at
www.nfacc.ca/newsroom



Progress on five new Codes

Latest developments under Year Two of current project funding

Major advancements have been made on five different Code of Practice updates during Year Two of current project funding.

Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens and Turkeys – Crossing the Finish Line

The Code of Practice for the care and handling of hatching eggs, breeders, chickens and turkeys will be released in June 2016. The public comment period ended in December 2015 and garnered almost 900 submissions.

Revisions to the “poultry Code” began in 2011. The process was initiated and supported by the Chicken Farmers of Canada, the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers. This has been one of the most complex Code development processes completed to date given the number of sectors involved.

“The Code Development Committee has worked hard on developing the draft Code and the public comment period has allowed us to check our work with a broader representative group,” says Vernon Froese, poultry producer and Chair of the Code Development Committee.

“The Code process provides an important opportunity for advancing farm animal welfare policy in Canada,” said poultry welfare expert Dr. Ian Duncan, representing the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies on the Code Committee. “A step forward has been taken with the completion of this Code.”

Poultry (Layers) – Get ready for the Public Comment Period!

The poultry (layers) Code’s public comment period will hopefully begin in May 2016. The exact date will soon be released, so watch NFACC’s website for that announcement. Egg Farmers of Canada initiated the Code developments process in 2012, with the support of the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council and Pullet Growers of Canada.

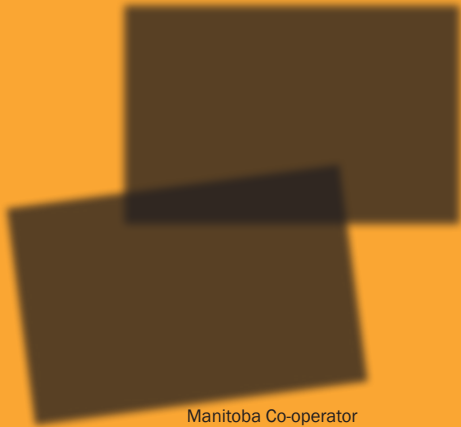
The Poultry (Layers) Code represents a major achievement that will define the parameters for animal welfare in different production settings – a feat that has focused on bird welfare first and foremost. Priority welfare issues addressed will include feather pecking and cannibalism, bone health, rearing methods, beak treatment, housing systems and housing space allowance and group sizes.

“Egg farmers want to ensure their practices are informed by the most up-to-date science and recognized by the broad base of sectors brought together by NFACC,” says Glen Jennings of Egg Farmers of Canada.

The Cattle Site
“Changes to the Canadian Beef Code...”



The Globe and Mail
“Egg Farmers of Canada pledges...”



Manitoba Co-operator
“New Poultry Code Drafted”

Get NFACC news directly. If you would like to join NFACC’s mail list to receive communication materials, ranging from newsletters to news releases, please email

ina@nfacc.ca

Rabbits

Progress toward a new rabbit Code of Practice has also made great strides, following initiation of the process by the Syndicat des producteurs de lapins du Québec, working in partnership with other provincial rabbit groups, in February 2015. The public comment period is scheduled for the Fall of 2016.

“The development of the rabbit Code is an excellent opportunity for Canada’s rabbit sector to come together and establish a national standard that ensures a good quality of life for rabbits raised in Canada,” says Maxime Tessier, Québec producer and Chair of the Code Development Committee. “The NFACC Code process will ensure this Code is relevant, current and developed with input from across our diverse sector.”

Priority welfare issues addressed in the rabbit Code will include housing and facilities, feed and water management, health management, reproduction, pre-transport, and euthanasia and on-farm slaughter.

Bison

A review and update of the bison Code of Practice is also underway, initiated in February 2015 by the Canadian Bison Association. The public comment period is scheduled for the Fall of 2016.

“Since the last Code was published in 2001, the benefits of science and another 15 years of experience with these majestic animals will allow us to update the present Code to provide producers and other stakeholders with clear and transparent practices on accepted bison care and handling practices,” says Mark Silzer, Code Committee Chair.

The Code will address priority welfare issues including how seasonality affects the nutritional requirements of bison, approaches for human euthanasia and slaughter on farm, understanding bison behavior and body language (for males, females and young bison) and pain management.

Veal Cattle

Rounding out the recent progress has been the veal cattle Code of Practice update, following initiation of the process by the Canadian Veal Association in February 2015. The public comment period is scheduled for the Fall of 2016.

“The Canadian Veal Association welcomes the veal Code of Practice review process,” says Robert Wynands, CVA President and Code Committee Chair. “The review and update of the veal cattle Code will involve stakeholders from a wide cross section of the industry and will be focused on ensuring up-to-date and practical approaches to the care and welfare of cattle raised for the veal market.”

Priority welfare issues addressed will include housing and facilities, fibre, risk factors for abomasal damage, milk feeding, and optimal strategies to reduce risk of iron deficiency.

“

The Code development process facilitates real improvements in farm animal welfare that can be applied to all farm animals in Canada.

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More information, including details on the Code of Practice development process, Scientific Committee reports and regular updates, is available on the NFACC website at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.



New Whiteboard Videos

Finding fresh ways to engage audiences and facilitate understanding is a rising focus for NFACC as part of its communications leadership approaches.

NFACC recently launched a new series of NFACC whiteboard videos that explain the Code development process. The first in the series, “Raising the Bar: The Codes of Practice Development Process” is available at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2cvixnA_MQ

A second video, “Key Features of the Code Development Process” highlights Code process features that contribute to sustainable animal welfare improvements and public trust while supporting the viability of Canadian farmers. View that video at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFbyJIFqwnM

“NFACC isn’t one person or entity – it is everybody, created to achieve what no one group could do on its own.”

– Toolika Rastogi,
Canadian Federation of Humane Societies



Resources and new YouTube channel

NFACC’s whiteboard videos, webinars and other extension tools related to the Codes are available on NFACC’s new YouTube channel at:

www.youtube.com/c/NFACCcanada

NFACC CODE DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

CODES OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF FARM ANIMALS



POULTRY MEAT	POULTRY LAYER	VEAL CATTLE	BISON	RABBITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry group identifies need for Code revision 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry group initiates the process with NFACC Announcement made for the revision of a Code on NFACC's website Industry group organizes the CDC** based on the Code of Practice development process 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team of leading researchers (SC*) engaged to review the scientific literature in relation to priority animal welfare issues to be covered by the Code 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDC prepares the Code SC reviews the scientific literature for each priority welfare issue and develops a report 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SC report goes to the CDC who ensures all the priority welfare issues have been addressed SC report goes for peer review and is finalized CDC uses the SC report to inform deliberations and decision-making on the Code 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final draft Code is submitted to NFACC NFACC publishes SC report NFACC makes Code available for 60-day public comment period (PCP) 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following PCP the CDC considers feedback and revises draft as needed 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDC submits final Code to NFACC NFACC publishes and prints the revised Code Industry begins efforts to ensure implementation of Codes 				

* SC - Scientific Committee

** CDC - Code Development Committee

Learn more...

This Achievements Report offers an overview of key progress during Year Two of current project funding. Comprehensive information on NFACC and its activities, including numerous resources and regular updates, is available at www.nfacc.ca. The website features language selection for both English and French.



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