

At-a-glance: Farmed Finfish Survey Results

706 RESPONDENTS

NEARLY 50%
said stocking density
is a high priority

**PARTICIPATION
ACROSS CANADA**
83 percent from BC

A few
findings taken
from the survey,
Feb 26 –
Mar 18, 2019

TOP 3 CONCERNS

- Stocking density
- Health monitoring & management
- Humane euthanasia & slaughter

TOP 3 GROUPS OF SURVEY-TAKERS

- General public
- Animal welfare advocate
- Consumer

Background

In a positive and exciting step for Canadian aquaculture, the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance has initiated the development of a first-ever Code of Practice for the care of farmed finfish. To begin this new and collaborative journey, the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) invited people to participate in an online survey.



The survey was designed to gather top-of-mind input from a broad range of interested parties and stakeholders, including those in the farmed finfish industry, key partners, animal welfare groups, and members of the general public. The survey was open from February 26 to March 18, 2019.

Response

Canadians responded with interest and awareness: 706 people from coast to coast, and beyond, took part in the survey. Just under half (48.2 percent) of all survey-takers contributed their top-of-mind welfare concerns. Thanks to each one of you for sharing your thoughts, suggesting solutions, and providing feedback. Your ideas will help shape this new Code.

Eighty-three percent of those who took part were from British Columbia. It is notable that the SPCA has an engaged group of supporters who were made aware of the survey. BC also has a large aquaculture industry—the largest of all the Canadian provinces, accounting for \$96,608,000 of Canada’s total aquaculture production value of \$1.39 billion in 2017. But aquaculture is an economically viable industry in every province and the Yukon Territory. Each region brings engagement and value to the nationwide whole, and the same may be said of the survey responses.

Where do the survey respondents live?

Top five geographic regions:

- British Columbia 583 (82.58%)
- Ontario 28 (3.97%)
- Quebec 27 (3.82%)
- Alberta 15 (2.12%)
- Nfld & Labrador 11 (1.56%)



Who took part?



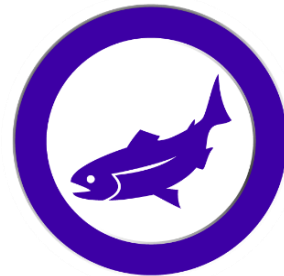
We heard from people representing a diverse range of backgrounds. As we see here, most survey-takers identified themselves in one or more of three categories (participants were able to identify as belonging to more than one group).

• General public	408	(57.79%)
• Animal welfare advocate	328	(46.46%)
• Consumer	272	(38.53%)
• Researcher/academic	41	(5.81%)
• Seafood farmer – finfish	34	(4.82%)
• Allied industry representative	27	(3.82%)
• Veterinarian	26	(3.68%)
• Animal welfare enforcement	21	(2.97%)
• Government	20	(2.83%)
• Retail and foodservice	15	(2.12%)
• Seafood farmer – other (e.g., shellfish, seaweed)	5	(0.71%)
• Transporter	4	(0.57%)

What was top-of-mind for survey respondents?

The top five welfare themes were:

- Stocking density
- Health monitoring and management
- Humane euthanasia and slaughter
- Water quality
- Humane handling



Nearly half of all respondents listed stocking density as a high priority. Within this theme, some concerns included:

- Maximum stocking density within enclosure and during transport
- Stocking density appropriate to the species, age, and size of the fish
- Density similar to that found in the wild
- The impact of stocking density on water quality, fish health, and normal behaviour
- Ensuring density requirements are science-based



"Good knowledge of species-specific requirements for the design of an environment that meets the needs and requirements of the species. Establish stand density by species."

"Enclosures and stocking density are priority issues. Many farmed fish species are not domesticated. Overcrowding and confinement of fish that have a natural history of being able to control their proximity to other fish, exercise, forage and live in a large home range is a major welfare concern."

"I've read and heard that farmed fish are contained tightly, meaning little room for movement, in areas where they are kept. This, in turn, makes it probable that diseases and ill health will spread fast and furious which is not a good thing. All living beings should have good mobility and space to move around in order to demonstrate behavior that is natural to them."

Many respondents stressed the importance of monitoring fish health and welfare, and some voiced concerns related to the health of wild stocks.

"Designation of health and welfare indicators, health planning and monitoring should be done according to our best information to keep fish healthy and thriving. Attention to sickness or injury should be immediate and should ensure the health and welfare of the majority of fish."

"The farm should be designed to prevent contamination of our ocean while providing optimum conditions for the farmed fish."

Respondents shared concerns relating to water quality, humane handling, and humane euthanasia and slaughter.

"Water quality and temperature standards for each species must be established, and frequent testing must lead to corrective action if ideal levels are not met."

“Caution must be taken with juvenile fish. Any handling that could impact growth, feeding, orientation and sex could prove detrimental for the species.”

“Death should be quick with little pain and distress. Methods need to be reliable and simple to carry out. Training should also include a backup plan – there should be 2 methods of approved humane euthanasia available to have an alternate if something goes wrong with the usual method. This would maintain the least amount of suffering and distress to the fish.”

Were any other issues identified?

Other welfare issues were identified as bearing some degree of priority, and include the following:

- Feed quality
- Enclosure design and maintenance
- Behavioural monitoring and management
- Emergency preparedness
- Transportation

“Enclosures must be designed with welfare in mind. Enclosure requirements will vary based on species, type of farm (land-based vs open water), climate, and more.”

“Staff trained in ethical handling, monitoring fish behavior, and emergency preparedness.”

How will the survey results be used? Next steps

With survey responses in hand, the Code committee now begins the critical, and exciting, work of drafting a brand-new Code. Briefly, the Code development process evolves in a careful, step-wise progression, one that emphasizes priority welfare issues and a science-informed, consensus-based approach.

This collaboration ultimately leads to a draft Code, which is then shared widely and available to the public for a 60-day comment period. We encourage you to voice your ideas at that time, too. Following this public comment period, the Code committee will consider all comments within the context of improving and finalizing the Code.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. As this Code is a first for Canadian aquaculture, it presents a unique opportunity for all stakeholders and interested members of the public.

As we move forward, know that your collective expertise, ideas, and insights have meaningful impact. Your contributions benefit and shape the development of a Code that reflects required and recommended practices for the care of farmed finfish.

More information about the NFACC and the Code development process may be found at www.nfacc.ca.

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