# Do You Know the Code?

**What is the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines***

A Code of Practice is a fundamental guide and reference document that supports people in their day-to-day decision making. Codes are written in a clear manner, are based on sound science and recommend practices that are practical, manageable and have measureable components and consider economic impacts. Codes of Practice serve three main purposes: (1) educational tools; (2) foundation documents for assessment programs; and (3) reference materials for regulations.

In this case, the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines,* is intended to promote sound management and welfare practices in regards to responsible horse, pony, donkey and mule ownership, health management, feeding, housing, feedlot management, principles of training, euthanasia and other husbandry practices.

The intention of the equine Code is to promote sound management and welfare practices and make clear the industry's current requirements alongside recommended practices that encourage a higher level of care in order for the industry to strive for continuous improvement. Consequently, it should inspire meaningful discussion on how people operate and improve how caregivers, and the industry in general, deal with grey areas.

The Code clearly identifies "Requirements" as well as "Recommended Practices". Requirements will refer either to a regulation or an industry imposed expectation. The Code's Recommended Practices will further support the Requirements in conjunction with promoting education and the adoption of practices for continuous improvement in animal welfare outcomes.

**How was the draft Code developed?**

An 18-person Equine Code Development Committee (CDC) and a five-person Scientists' Committee (SC), the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines* worked for two-and-half years to revise the previous Code.

As a starting point, the CDC and SC identified and agreed to a list of five priority welfare issues thought to be of universal importance to animal welfare that would benefit from a review of the available scientific literature.

Development of the draft text included more than 100 hours of face-to-face meetings, in addition to online and telephone communications by each of the Committees, and public participation through three online surveys designed to gain stakeholder insights and views on the care and handling of horses, ponies, donkeys and mules in Canada. The final steps included a national 60-day Public Comment Period followed by consideration of the feedback and adjustments to the Code.

Getting to this point has been years in the making. Equine Canada first took up the charge in 2005 to lead the renewal of Canada's original 1998 *Code of Practice for Horses*.

In 2009, following four years of broad consultation amongst numerous farmed animal industries, consensus was reached to move forward with restarting Code of Practice development in Canada. Under the auspices of the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC), member organizations contributed to the creation of a seven-step Code Development Process–essentially a roadmap by which all future farmed animal Codes would be developed. The key components are:

- the inclusion of Scientists' Committees to review research on priority welfare issues
- ownership of the individual Codes by the relevant stakeholders through their active participation in developing the Code
- measureable components to facilitate the development of assessment programs
- a transparent process

For more information / Pour un complément d'information

In April 2010, the Government of Canada announced a contribution of $3.4 million over three years through *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agricultural Flexibility Fund,* as part of *Canada's Economic Action Plan*, to help NFACC facilitate the development and/or renewal of eight Codes, an on-farm assessment protocol and other key NFACC initiatives. More than $300,000 of the funding was allocated to the development of the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines.*

Following the government's announcement Equine Canada's Code Criteria Group, a four-person committee, consisting of the Equine Canada Past President, two members of the Equine Canada Health and Welfare Committee and a non-Equine Canada affiliated individual, outlined the criteria and process by which they would solicit nominations and make recommendations for the CDC under NFACC.

By the end of 2010, the Code Criteria Group had recommended 17 people from eight provinces to join the Chair of the SC on the CDC. Representing a broad cross section, the CDC members have significant expertise in care and custody, equine health and veterinary care, technical knowledge, research, welfare legislation, regulation and enforcement, environmental and ecological science, biosecurity, and international best practices. Expertise in the unique husbandry practices required for large-scale equine breeding, feedlot management, draft horses, donkeys and mules, Quarter Horses, Arabians, and horses used in racing, jumping, dressage, eventing, driving, western sport, recreation and outfitting are well-represented.

At the same time, NFACC hired two Equine Code Secretaries and also appointed members to the SC through a nomination process. A complete list of CDC and SC members and their short biographies can be viewed online at www.equinecanada.ca/industry. Click on *Code of Practice Renewal* in the left-hand menu.

### *Do You Know the Code?*
We strongly encourage you to download your personal copy and read it thoroughly. This is an important document for our industry, and the health and welfare of our horses.