

Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals

Pigs

THE CODES OF PRACTICE:

The Codes of Practice are nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different species of farm animals. Codes are not intended to be used as production manuals; instead, the Codes are designed to be used as an educational tool in the promotion of sound husbandry and welfare practices. The Codes contain recommendations to assist farmers and others in the agriculture and food sector to compare and improve their own management practices.

THE RECOMMENDED CODE FOR PIGS:

The first code for the care and handling of pigs was published in 1984 by Agriculture Canada. The pig industry, knowledge and the expectations of society are ever changing. In this light, the Canadian Pork Council, representing producers, initiated the revising and updating of the Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of pigs.

In 1992 a committee of individuals and organizations interested in promoting high standards of responsible animal care for the Canadian pig industry was formed to update the code to reflect advances and changes in the industry. The second recommended code of practice for pigs was published in 1993.

The Code of practice for pigs is divided into three parts:

- Producers
- Handling and transportation
- Processors.

This factsheet only highlights a small amount of the information found in the complete Recommended Code of Practice for pigs.

A copy of the complete recommended code of practice can be obtained from your local commodity organization or provincial agricultural office.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RECOMMENDED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF PIGS:



SECTION 1: PRODUCERS

HOUSING:

- Every type of housing system must provide conditions conducive to comfort, good health, growth and performance at all stages of the pig's life.
- In any type of housing system, temperature is an important factor. Temperature requirements (thermal comfort zones) vary with the age and size of the pig (Table 1) and the environmental conditions in the housing system used.

Table 1 Thermal comfort zones for pigs of various ages

Stage of growth	Weight of pig (kg)	Range of zone (°C)
Piglet	Birth to 6 kg	34-24
Weaner	6-25	32-18
Grower	25-50	25-15
Finisher	50-100	25-15
Breeding stock	>100	21-10

- Note that temperature at pig level may differ several degrees from that at higher levels, where it is commonly measured.

VENTILATION:

- Protect pigs of all ages from draughts. Protection is extremely important for piglets up to 2 weeks of age, newly weaned pigs and sick/injured pigs.
- The effects of dust on the health of pigs are not well documented nor are the ways of reducing dust levels in the room. Until ways of reducing respirable dust levels are better defined, follow simple, good housekeeping habits.

FLOORING:

- All floors must be safe for pigs. Flooring materials differ in their suitability for pigs of different ages. Some characteristics to look for include:
 - a dry, well drained surface
 - solid nonslip footing
 - sharp edges that may cause injury.

PENS AND EQUIPMENT:

- All equipment used in a facility must be the correct size for the type of pig and management system used. All equipment purchases and new construction should be based on the animal's needs.
- The design of single housing units should always allow the pigs freedom to stand up and lie down comfortably.
- In the design of group pens, the recommended amount of floor space per pig depends mainly of the following:
 - . body size
 - . floor construction
 - . environmental temperature.
- In hot weather floor space per pig may need to be increased by 10 to 15% and may require an even greater increase on solid floors to allow for necessary heat dissipation.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH:

- Pigs should be fed daily, using a diet that meets the basic nutritional needs of given categories of pigs as currently defined the National Research Council (NRC).

WATERING:

- Drinking water must be available at all times. It should be fresh and free from contamination. Nipple drinkers provide an excellent source of clean, uncontaminated water.
- In areas where water quality may vary, test the water regularly to ensure its suitability for the animals.

HEALTH:

- Good housekeeping practices such as removing manure, washing down pens, disinfecting and generally cleaning up the facility are essential to maintaining a healthy herd.
- Pigs should be checked twice daily for signs of disease, injury or noncompetitiveness (for food).
- Sick or injured animals should be attended to immediately, preferably moved to a warm, comfortable, draft-free environment.
- Entry to barns should be controlled to reduce the risk of disease being either transmitted by people (on boots, etc.), pets, rodents or wild animals.
- Medications should be used only on the advice of a veterinarian, following recommended treatment levels.
- Long term treatment or control measures using medications alone are not satisfactory. Appropriate management changes (ie. better sanitation, reduced stocking density) must also be initiated.

STOCKMANSHIP:

- Before working with pigs, attendants should receive adequate instruction and know the basic needs of the animals entrusted to their care. By recognizing behaviours and other symptoms that indicate discomfort or disease problems, attendants should know when they need to take remedial action or to consult a veterinarian.
 - To minimize the pigs' excitement, all attendants should wear clothing that looks similar and should make an easily recognized signal before entering the barn or the room.
 - Pigs should be lifted with care, gentleness and patience.
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All codes are presently developed by a review committee made up of representatives from farm groups, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, animal scientists, federal and provincial governments, related agricultural sectors and interested individuals. The following are some of the individuals that provided input at various stages in the drafting of this code.

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
- Canadian Pork Council and affiliated provincial organizations

In 1995, the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC) and its Canada Committee on Animals and its Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour, took the lead, along with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies in updating existing codes and developing new commodity codes.

Further information on the process of Code Development can be obtained from the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC), Heritage House, Building 60, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C6.

Request for copies of the Codes can be addressed to the national commodity group and/or specific provincial organizations.

This factsheet was prepared by Penny Lawlis, Animal Care Inspector, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, with the assistance of an Editorial Committee. Animal welfare factsheets have been printed and distributed through the financial support of your provincial agriculture department.