

# At-a-glance: Dairy Cattle Survey Results

**1257 SURVEY RESPONSES**

3606 welfare comments

## DOMINANT CONCERNS

Housing  
Movement  
Painful & stressful practices  
Handling  
Lameness

## PROVINCES WITH HIGHEST RESPONSE RATE

BC 69%  
ON 11%  
QC 7%



A few findings taken from the survey, March 29 - April 19, 2019

## OTHER CONCERNS INCLUDED

Feed and water  
Health management  
Milking practices  
Calf care  
Cull cow care

## TOP 3 GROUPS OF SURVEY-TAKERS

General public  
Consumer  
Animal welfare advocate

## Background

Canada's current Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle was published in 2009. Since that time, the dairy cattle industry has continued to evolve. In order to keep current with government policy and regulatory changes, scientific and technological advancements, progressive on-farm practices and innovations, and societal expectations, Dairy Farmers of Canada recently initiated an update to the 2009 Code.

The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) will facilitate the update utilizing its Code development process, with an anticipated completion date in the fall of 2021.

## Survey

As a preliminary step in the Code updating process, NFACC launched an online survey, open from March 29<sup>th</sup> to April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Anyone interested in participating was able to respond to the survey, and participants were asked to contribute their top-of-mind concerns relating to dairy cattle welfare.



We received 1,257 survey responses from across Canada and are grateful to all who took the time to contribute. Your thoughtful insights assist the Code committee in understanding the most important considerations of those with an interest in dairy cattle welfare. These responses serve as the primary means of incorporating perspectives of the Canadian public into the Code at the outset of the development process.

## Where do the survey respondents live?

• British Columbia	865	(68.81%)
• Ontario	132	(10.5%)
• Québec	85	(6.76%)
• Alberta	71	(5.65%)
• Manitoba	25	(1.99%)
• Nova Scotia	25	(1.99%)
• Saskatchewan	15	(1.19%)
• New Brunswick	14	(1.11%)
• Prince Edward Island	13	(1.03%)
• Other	5	(0.40%)



- United States 5 (0.40%)
- Newfoundland and Labrador 1 (0.08%)
- Yukon 1 (0.08%)

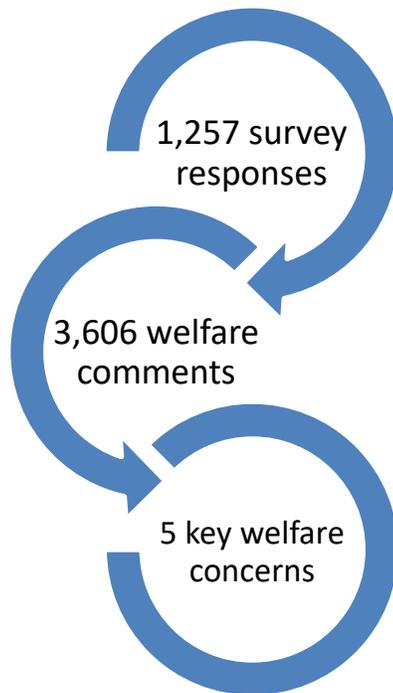
## Who took part?



We were pleased to hear from a diverse range of voices. Note that respondents were able to identify as belonging to more than one group.

- General public 550 (43.75%)
- Consumer 492 (39.14%)
- Animal welfare advocate 461 (36.67%)
- Producer - dairy 262 (20.84%)
- Other 98 (7.80%)
- Veterinarian 81 (6.44%)
- Producer – beef 55 (4.38%)
- Researcher/academic 39 (3.10%)
- Animal welfare enforcement 38 (3.02%)
- Allied industry representative 23 (1.83%)
- Producer – veal 20 (1.59%)
- Producer association (national or provincial) 20 (1.59%)
- Processor – dairy 19 (1.51%)
- Retail and food service 18 (1.43%)
- Transporter 17 (1.35%)
- Government 15 (1.19%)
- Feed specialist, Nutritionist 15 (1.19%)
- Hoof trimmer 15 (1.19%)
- Producer – other commodity 12 (0.95%)
- Processor - meat 11 (0.88%)
- Auditor 7 (0.56%)

## What was top-of-mind for survey respondents?



From the 1,257 survey responses received, 3,606 individual welfare comments were extracted, and from those comments five predominant welfare concerns were identified.

**1 Housing:** Respondent concerns included cleanliness, comfort, bedding, air quality and ventilation, injury prevention, stalling and tethering, calf housing, restriction of movement, socialization, and ability to exhibit normal behaviours.

*"Clean comfortable bedding and housing."*

*"Make it a requirement that all cattle get 3 inches or more material for their bedding."*

*"Comfortable environment including stalls, alleys, feed, water, air, temperature."*

*"Injuries due to inadequate bedding or stall design, hock, knee..."*

*"Cows and calves must not be tied or tethered."*

*"Prohibit tie stalls; instead require free stalls with deep bedding."*



*"No tethering ... No calf hutches (pair housing instead)."*

*"Unnecessary restriction of movement and natural behaviour for cows and calves."*

*"Allow natural behaviour, grooming, social with space."*

**2 Movement:** Respondent comments focused on confinement, overcrowding, the need for freedom of movement and exercise, access to pasture or the outdoors, and appropriate stocking density.

*"Restraint of animals confined, tethered, no outdoor time/space."*

*"Sufficient space and freedom of movement--preferably regular access to pasture."*

*"Overcrowding that restricts movement and normal behavior."*

*"Density of cattle in barns."*

**3 Painful and stressful practices:** Here respondents were concerned with painful procedures in general, including branding, castration, dehorning, disbudding, insemination, and tail docking; use of pain control; elimination of potentially painful procedures; stress avoidance; and separation stress to both cow and calf.

*"Any practice that is painful or stressful to the animal."*

*"Stop all painful treatments and practices of cow and calves."*

*"Prohibit dehorning after 3 weeks of age."*

*"Mandatory use of pain medication for painful procedures."*

*"Separation of young from mother - traumatic."*

**4 Handling:** Concerns related to abusive handling with respondents citing the use of electric prods and tail twisting, the need for humane handling practices, and training for proper handling techniques to facilitate handler safety.

*"No painful handling i.e., electric prods, tail twisting, beating."*

*"Lack of training for animal handling (stockmanship)."*

**5 Lameness:** Respondents were concerned about lameness in general, and commented on specific issues such as hoof health, lameness identification, routine checking, monitoring, treatment, pain control, and lameness prevention practices such as regular hoof trimming.

*"Hoof/foot health and lameness."*

*"Lameness (feet and hooves regularly inspected and treated)."*

*"Prompt attention to lameness."*

*"Take more steps to prevent and treat lameness before it becomes severe."*

*"Feet and claws trimmed 2x annually..."*

## **Were any other issues identified?**

Several other concerns were identified, though with less frequency than the five key issues above. These additional welfare concerns were categorized as follows:

- Feed and water
- Health management
- Milking practices
- Calf care
- Cull cow care
- Euthanasia
- Transportation
- Non-ambulatory cattle
- Emergency preparation
- On-farm slaughter



## **How will the survey results be used? Next steps?**

The survey input has been clearly heard and provides a rich source of information that will help the Code committee as it begins revising the existing Code.

As with all updates and revisions, this Code will progress through a prescribed course of science-informed steps, as outlined in the [Code development process](#). The process includes another opportunity for public input at a later date: once the committee

completes its final draft Code, it will be posted online (on NFACC's website) for feedback during a 60-day public comment period.

We invite you to join us at that time. Every submission received is carefully reviewed and considered in the context of improving and finalizing the Code.

## **Thank you**

NFACC and all involved in revising this Code thank you for sharing your unique views and values. Thank you for joining us in working towards a common goal: an updated Code that reflects current and progressive practices for dairy cattle management and dairy cattle well being.

For more information on NFACC and the Code development process, please visit [www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca).

*Funding for this project has been provided through the AgriAssurance Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal–provincial–territorial initiative.*