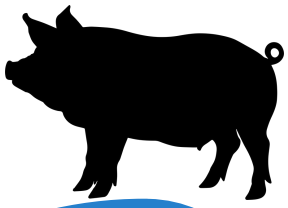
At a Glance: Pig Code Top-of-Mind Survey Results



PROVINCES WITH HIGHEST RESPONSE RATE

British Columbia 59%
Ontario 18%
Alberta 8%

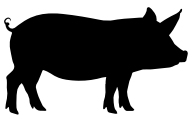
2,341 SURVEY RESPONSES

6,742 Welfare Comments

A FEW FINDINGS TAKEN FROM THE SURVEY MAY 15 - JUNE 4 2025

MAIN WELFARE THEMES IDENTIFIED

Confinement to gestation & farrowing crates
Painful procedures & pain management
Euthanasia methods, depopulation & slaughter
Providing enrichment
General living conditions



TOP 3 CATEGORIES OF SURVEY TAKERS

Concerned Citizen 72%
Consumer 15%
Animal Welfare Enforcement 4%

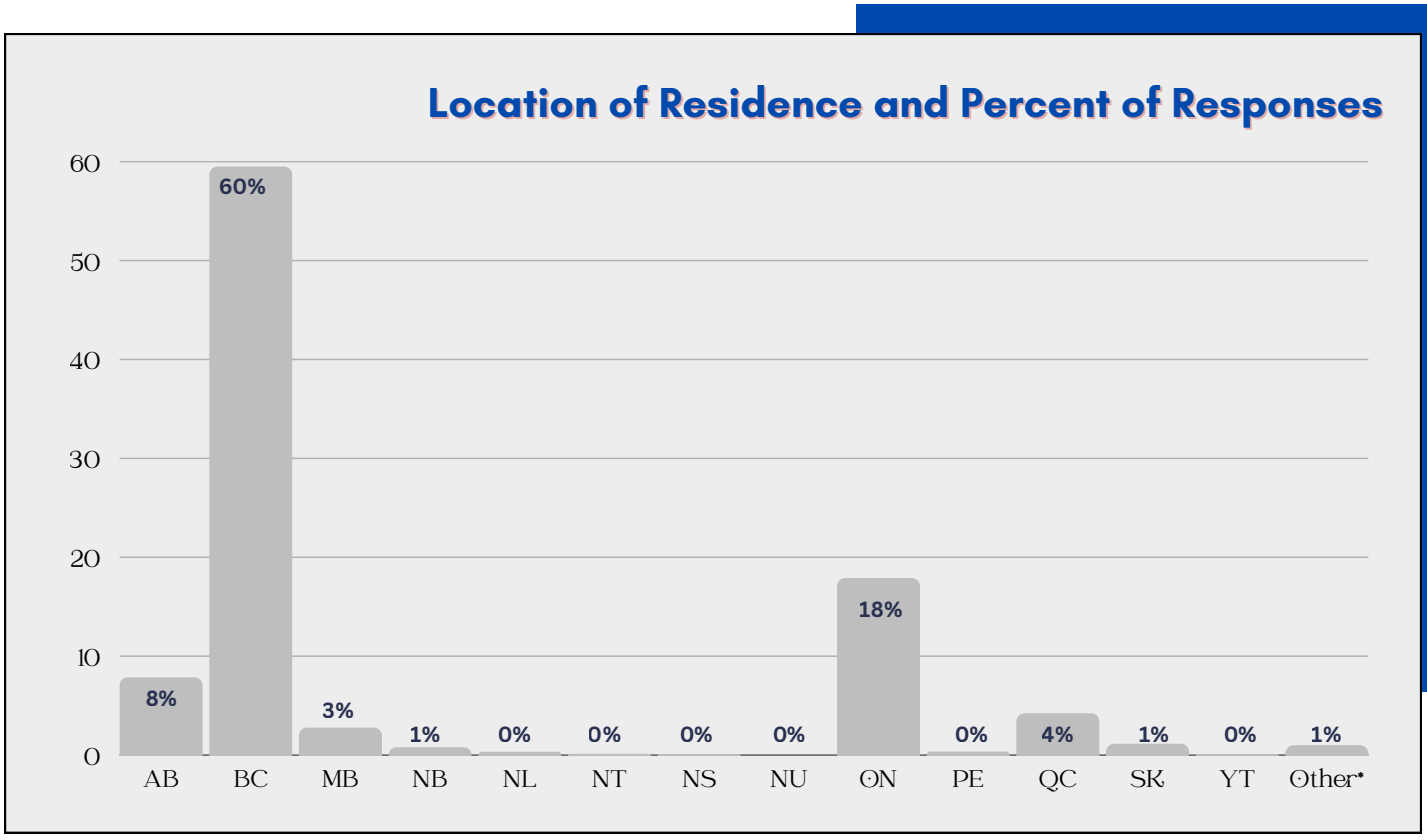
Background

The Canadian Pork Council has initiated an update to the 2014 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs using the process coordinated by the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). Once completed, the updated Code will reflect revised requirements and recommended practices for the care and welfare of pigs raised in Canada.

Survey

From May 15 through June 4, 2025, industry members, concerned citizens, and any other interested individuals were invited to participate in a survey seeking to capture top-of-mind thoughts around pig welfare as a lead-in to the Code update process. The input received through this early public engagement helps the Code Committee understand the top issues that people, especially Canadians, consider important.

Where do the survey respondents live?



*Other locations include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States.

Who took part?

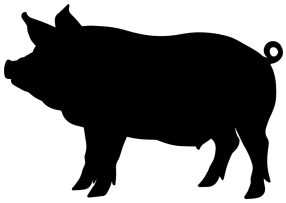
We were pleased to hear from a diverse range of voices. Note that respondents were able to identify as belonging to more than one group.

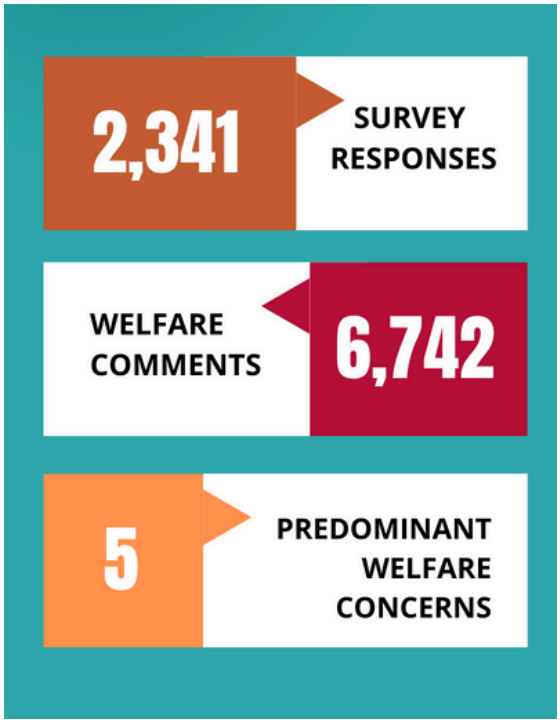
Perspective	# of Responses	Percentage
• Agricultural engineer	1	0.04%
• Allied industry	6	0.3%
• Animal welfare advocate	56	2%
• Animal welfare enforcement	93	4%
• Auditor	2	0.09%
• Concerned citizen	1683	72%
• Consumer	360	15%
• Feed specialist / nutritionist	1	0.04%
• Government	6	0.3%
• Processor	1	0.04%
• Producer: farrow to finish	11	0.5%
• Producer: farrow / nursery	2	0.09%
• Producer: grow / finish	5	0.2%
• Producer: other	9	0.4%
• Researcher/academic	32	1.4%
• Retail and/or food service	9	0.4%
• Transporter	2	0.09%
• Veterinarian/veterinary technician	41	1.7%
• Other*	21	0.9%

*Other categories include those involved in animal rescue, activists, animal caregivers, and others.

What was top-of-mind?

NFACC received **2341 survey responses** from which **6742 individual welfare topics** or comments were extracted. From those, **five predominant welfare concerns** were identified.





1. Confinement to Gestation and Farrowing Crates

Many respondents were concerned about sows being confined to gestation and farrowing crates and the lack of space provided for pigs to move freely in their environment. There were many calls to ban the use of gestation crates and to limit the use of farrowing crates. There were also concerns about the space provided in gestation and farrowing crates. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"End the use of gestation and extensively limit the use of farrowing crates."
"Extreme confinement in gestation/farrowing crates prevents pigs from turning around."
"Ban gestation crates. All pigs deserve space to move and express natural needs."
"End use of gestation stalls, limit use of farrowing crates, and allow greater housing space."
"Farrowing crates are way too small."
"Eliminate crates for sows. Need freedom of movement / social interaction / ability to nest."
"Concerned about the time spent in gestation crates."
"Please eliminate gestation and farrowing crates. They are cruel and inhumane."

2. Painful Procedures and Pain Management

Routine painful procedures was a top concern of respondents. Specific concerns included castration, tail docking, teeth clipping, ear notching, and tagging. There were calls to ban specific painful procedures, adjust management practices to prevent the necessity of performing painful procedures, and to mandate the use of pain medications before and after painful procedures. Managing pain associated with illness and injury was another common request from respondents. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Concerned about the lack of pain management for illness or medical procedure."
"End painful procedures like tail docking and castration without full pain relief."
"Ending unnecessary and painful procedures such as tail docking."
"Pigs must be given medications for pain management when performing painful procedures."
"Reduce and eliminate painful practices by adjusting management."
"Analgesics and anesthetics should be mandatory for all painful procedures."
"Eliminate pain and discomfort (pain medications, better flooring/bedding, etc.)."

3. Euthanasia Methods, Depopulation, and Slaughter

End-of-life care was top-of-mind for many respondents. Respondents were concerned about routine on-farm euthanasia methods, specifically blunt force trauma. Some concerns were raised about mass depopulation methods used during disease outbreaks and emergencies. Although the scope of the survey asked for on-farm welfare topics, welfare issues at slaughter plants were also submitted. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Ban inhumane forms of euthanasia like blunt force trauma."
"Thumping of piglets is barbaric and should be banned."
"Piglet thumping should be outlawed. Use humane injections to euthanize piglets."
"Blunt force trauma as euthanasia must end- this is a cruel and unnecessary practice."
"The practice of euthanasia by blunt force trauma is an ethically concerning method."
"Humane euthanasia methods, i.e. injectable drugs, must be the ONLY acceptable option."
"Prohibit the use of inhumane depopulation methods VSD, VSD+ and water-based foam."
"End the use of CO2 gas chambers in slaughterhouses."
"Timely humane intervention for illness or injury."

4. Providing Enrichment

There were many comments regarding the intelligence of pigs and their need for mental and social stimulation. Many respondents were concerned with the barren environments in which pigs are housed and wanted to see more complex or enriched environments provided. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Provide enriched living environments – these are highly intelligent animals."
"Expand living space in general with easily accessed enrichment."
"Enrichment items: List examples instead of complicated long list of requirements."
"Enriched environment through straw, play/food items and lower stocking density."
"Pigs are intelligent and social creatures needing natural outdoor environments."
"Improvements in enrichment practices, based on up-to-date scientific research."
"Enriched environment (sunshine, grass) to allow natural behaviour."
"Lack of enrichment, unnatural environments for pigs, kept in unsanitary confined areas."
"Freedom to move in a natural environment as well as social stimulation."
"Access to appropriate, engaging, and varied environmental enrichment."
"Give enrichment opportunities so the pigs are happier while they are alive."

5. General Living Conditions

Survey respondents frequently mentioned the importance of improving general living conditions including the housing environment and access to outdoor spaces. Grouped in this category were also comments about natural living, factory farming, and humane treatment. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Outdoor access should be a priority."
"Improve housing conditions including the lowering of ammonia levels and improving flooring."
"Environments with good ventilation and lighting, and comfortable resting places."
"More living space for ALL animals to move full, play and socialize."
"Humane treatment in all aspects of care."
"Clean comfortable living conditions."
"END factory farming."
"Sow lameness – preventative housing practices, including group housing and bedding."
"Lack of access to outdoors for rooting."
"Unnatural living conditions; limited space and no outdoor access."
"Living conditions for pigs are inhumane (e.g. tiny crates, slatted and concrete flooring.)"
"Appropriate housing including bedding, hygiene, size, lighting and temperature."

Were there any other issues identified?

Several other concerns were identified, though with less frequency than the key issues above. Additionally, some comments were outside the scope for this Code update. The additional or out of scope welfare concerns included:

- Overall care and welfare
- Gentle, compassionate, ethical handling
- Natural behaviour
- Access to feed and water
- Feed quality
- Over feeding
- Health and disease management
- Disease spread
- Ability to nest
- Separating sows and piglets
- Weaning age
- Free farrowing
- Intensive breeding
- Improved vet care and vet access
- Foot care
- Lameness and injury prevention
- Treatment of injured and dying pigs
- Extreme temperatures
- Assessing animal fitness before loading
- Transportation conditions, weather, duration, stress, crowding, access to food & water
- Costly Code requirements shifting production to countries with lower standards
- Economic constraints of pork industry
- Science-based Code requirements
- Factory farming, intensive farming
- Genetic mutations for faster growth
- Genetic manipulation
- Antibiotic, hormone, and steroid use
- Antibiotic resistant bacteria
- Education and training
- Rough handling practices
- Stress and fear
- Electric prod use
- Animal cruelty /abuse
- Sprinkler systems in barns
- Disaster preparedness
- Biosecurity
- One health
- Vaccines
- Environmental pollution
- Sustainability
- Stress affecting meat quality & human health
- Increased auditing and enforcement
- Transparency of animal welfare practices

How will the survey results be used?

All Code updates are careful, considerate, intentional, and rigorous. They encompass all aspects of on-farm care, while emphasizing key welfare issues. For these reasons, collaborations between stakeholders are essential. The input obtained through this survey will make a valuable contribution to the Code update as it will help to better inform all Code Committee members.

Once the Code Committee produces a draft of the updated Code, it will be open for public comment. NFACC strongly encourages feedback during the 60-day public comment period. All comments are reviewed and taken into consideration.

Thank you!

Thank you to all respondents for sharing your concerns, thoughts, and suggestions related to pig care and welfare. Your voices and opinions play an integral role in the update process. For more information on NFACC and the Code development process, please visit www.nfacc.ca.

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