



**Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association  
Livestock Care Conference  
Red Deer, Alberta - March 23, 2007**

Media release and conference presentations are available on AFAC's website ([www.afac.ab.ca](http://www.afac.ab.ca))

Conference speakers covered a range of topics: science & ethics, New Zealand's approach to Codes, practical research approaches, drivers for animal welfare audits, and effective communication strategies.

**Science & Ethics**

- Science and ethics always overlap
- Ethics deals with what ought to be, science deals with what is
- Animal welfare is ultimately a question of what ought to be, but decisions in this regard should be based on what is (science)
- Definition of animal welfare includes production, health, stress, pain/suffering, and behaviour.
- Research can tell us how much space an animal needs to engage in a behaviour, but it cannot tell us if the animal ought to be able to perform the behaviour.
- Animal agriculture needs to deal with the ethics of an issue, not just the science

**New Zealand Codes of Welfare**

- Animal Welfare Act (1999) established the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) and minimum standards through the Codes of Welfare.
- Recommended best practices in the Codes are not legally binding, but minimums are.
- Evidence of meeting or exceeding minimums can be used as a defence against prosecution.
- Code is formatted to clearly illustrate what are minimums vs. best practices.
- Codes are reviewed every 10 years – the manner for drafting Codes and the period for comment ensures that producers are generally in compliance by the time a Code is released.
- NAWAC develops Codes with government funding

**Practical Research Approaches**

3 Strategies used to measure welfare in a practical setting:

- Engineering/design/resource – prescriptive features of the environment (e.g., space allowance, # of feeders, methods of castration/euthanasia)
- Performance/animal-based/outcome – biological responses of the animal to housing and procedures (e.g., health, disease, injury, physical condition, behaviour responses)
- Management based – measures of human factors (e.g., quality of handling, daily care, SOP's)

Research on group housing for sows outlined as an example (see presentation at [www.afac.ab.ca](http://www.afac.ab.ca))  
Animal welfare starts with the individual – stockperson, handler, transporter. Quality of human-animal interactions is key.

## Drivers for Animal Welfare Audits

- Cultural confusion as to the role of animals in society – pets, meat or part of the family
- Consumers want safe, clean food and good animal care – and some are willing to pay (67% of North Americans buys organic on a regular basis)
- Retailers will respond – they know their markets
- The longer agriculture industries wait to address animal care, the more options will be taken away
- A trigger event will eventually launch animal welfare as a major issue
- Science alone is not going to prevail – need to be accountable
  - Be 100% compliant, one incident ruins it
  - Consider moving beyond compliance
  - Communicate – let the community in on your business
  - Prove what you are doing
  - Think like the people you are selling to

## Effective Communication Strategies

3 messages:

- Listen to consumers as we try to tell our story
- Listen to consumers as we try to feed and cloth them
- Listen to your conscience and use your head as you work with animals

“Those who do not know their opponent’s arguments, do not completely understand their own.” – Bender and Leone

“Your opponents are never wrong about everything.” – Steve Allen

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