

Advancing **Animal Welfare** and **Public Trust** Through **Codes of Practice**

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT
APRIL 2023-MARCH 2025

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Congratulations to the team at the National Farm Animal Care Council on 20 years of leadership and innovation in sustainable livestock production.

The Honourable Heath MacDonald
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Message from the Minister



Congratulations to the team at the National Farm Animal Care Council on 20 years of leadership and innovation in sustainable livestock production. Over those two decades, you have grown into a global leader in animal welfare collaboration, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, from farmers, to animal welfare groups, to enforcement agencies and government representatives.

Taking a rigorous science-first approach founded in trust, communication and respect, you invite everyone to the table to advance farm animal welfare, while keeping our livestock farm businesses strong and viable.

Today, your 14 codes of practice are covering virtually every major farmed animal species in Canada and are constantly

updated to reflect the latest advances in animal welfare – as well as the diverse interests of all stakeholders, giving everyone a voice, and promoting mutual understanding and respect.

As demand for high-quality, sustainably produced protein continues to grow, high standards of animal care and welfare have never been more essential. It's why your world-class expertise is needed now more than ever.

Your credible, science-informed approach to developing, updating and maintaining codes of practice will continue to build lasting trust with consumers here in Canada and around the world – while growing our economy. All told, animal production in Canada drives \$5.6 billion of our GDP, over 100,000 jobs and over \$20 billion in exports. Our government is proud of its ongoing support to your very important work, including through our five-year investment of over \$4.8 million under the current Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Farmers and ranchers across Canada work tirelessly to produce top-quality products and hold themselves to the highest standards for animal health and welfare.

Let's continue our team approach to keep the sector safe and strong for generations to come.

Once again, congratulations on reaching this important milestone. I have no doubt that the best is yet to come!

H. MacDonald

The Honourable Heath MacDonald
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Celebrating 20 Years of NFACC

This August marks 20 years since NFACC’s inaugural meeting, and the continuation of setting the national standards of care for farmed animals through multi-stakeholder engagement.

At initiation, there were 22 members; today, that number has more than doubled, with 27 primary members and partners, and an additional 26 associate members. Through the careful stewardship of past Chairs, Gordon Coukell (2005-2006), Edouard Asnong (2006-2014), and Ryder Lee (2014-2022), along with many dedicated members, NFACC has become the national voice addressing farmed animal welfare standards development in Canada.

While Canada has had Codes of Practice since the 1980s, NFACC supplemented the Code process with important measures that improve transparency and broaden participation, including:

- ✦ Scientific Committees that develop peer-reviewed reports reviewing animal welfare literature on priority topics
- ✦ Top of Mind surveys to better understand welfare concerns at the outset of the Code development process
- ✦ A 60-day Public Comment Period for all Codes under development/ amendment to invite stakeholder feedback
- ✦ Five-year Code Reviews to assess a Code’s progress in the years since its launch.

NFACC, and its processes, provide the space and opportunity for varied stakeholders to work collaboratively in achieving our common goal of continual improvement in farm animal welfare standards. In a world that has become increasingly polarized, NFACC members are incredibly proud that we consistently make the time and effort to engage in difficult conversations with those we may not normally spend time with to advance the welfare of farmed animals in Canada.



Hans Kristensen, NFACC Chair

As we look to the more recent past, much has been accomplished since we last published an NFACC Achievements Report, notably:

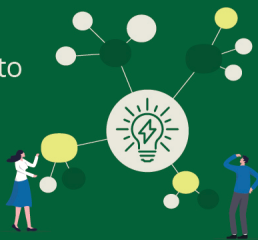
- ✓ NFACC undertook an organizational governance review, including an assessment and strengthening of our consensus model for decision-making at the NFACC board table
- ✓ NFACC, through Animal Health Canada, received just over \$4.8M under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to support amendment/updates to 6 Codes of Practice and 3 five-year Code reviews. These planned Code reviews, updates, and amendments are now underway.

You’ll find these accomplishments, and more, detailed in the pages that follow. As we look back and celebrate these milestones, I also find myself looking ahead and cannot help but be excited for what is to come. Happy 20th Birthday NFACC – here’s to 20 more; may the next twenty years take us to even greater places!

H. Kristensen

NFACC FUNDAMENTALS

Diversity Leads to
Better **Decision**
Making.



In a world that has become increasingly polarized, NFACC members should be incredibly proud that we consistently make the time and effort to engage in difficult conversations with those we may not normally spend time with to advance the welfare of farmed animals in Canada.

Hans Kristensen
NFACC Chair



NFACC FUNDAMENTALS

Accommodation & Respect
for the Opinions of Others

Governance Review

In 2022 NFACC's Board initiated an organizational governance review. It was time to look inwards at NFACC's core values and decision-making processes as much had changed in the post-pandemic world. Some of the underlying questions at NFACC were, "what does consensus really mean? And, with disparate ideas of consensus, how does that affect the way we make decisions and work together?" NFACC, as an organization, needed to strengthen its consensus decision-making process (which included dispute resolution) to maintain a solutions-oriented approach.

NFACC contracted a governance specialist to support a new Governance Committee that led the review. Key deliverables of the review included:

- ✓ Evaluate and update NFACC's core values
- ✓ Confirm if a consensus model is the best decision model for NFACC and if so, gain agreement on what consensus means at NFACC
- ✓ Review and refresh NFACC's decision-making process, including dispute resolution
- ✓ Prepare a governance manual for NFACC

The results of the governance review were presented and accepted by the NFACC Board in June 2024. NFACC's updated core values are posted on NFACC's website [here](#), along with a brief outline of what consensus-decision making means.

Consensus Decision Making is a Collaborative Process



Consensus at the Board Level

Stemming from the governance review, the NFACC Board implemented a "coloured card" process for achieving consensus at board meetings. Green, yellow, or red cards provide more nuance to Board members' opinions and decisions which can be captured both in the collective decision of the group and the official meeting minutes.

Green means "I agree." Yellow means "I can live with the decision." Red means "I don't agree, and I am willing to work to find a better way, taking into account what has been said by all group members."

Thus, a red card doesn't block progress, it signifies that the person who displayed it will work with others to identify another solution that is more acceptable to them while meeting the interests of others. As well, the new dispute resolution process can be triggered in rare cases where consensus can't be reached after a documented and fulsome effort.

While the governance policies are specific to the NFACC Board, the language around what consensus means is consistent with how Code Committees also function.

Transparency



Soliciting Input



Representation



Consensus in action at an NFACC meeting.



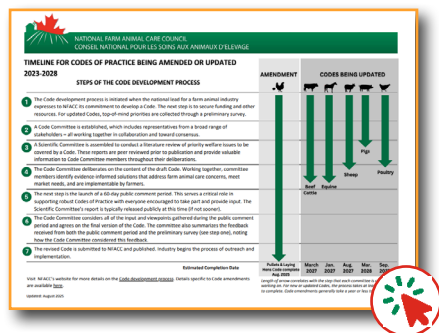
NFACC has a 28 person board. Click [here](#) for a list of Primary Members and partners that make up the board.



Code Updates Underway

Code Updates

From late 2023 through to 2028, NFACC will be working with the beef cattle; equine; sheep; pig; and hatching egg, breeders, chicken, and turkey sectors to update their Codes of Practice. In addition, the pullets and laying hens Code has been amended. NFACC is grateful for the financial support provided from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership to undertake this large initiative. Each official launch of a Code update/ amendment is being staggered to spread the workload and accommodate the readiness of each sector and their Code Committees. All Code Committees will follow [NFACC's Code development process](#) as shown in the infographic below.

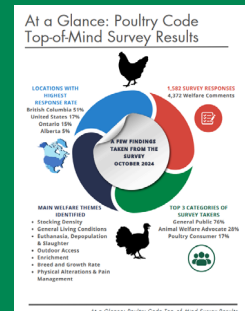
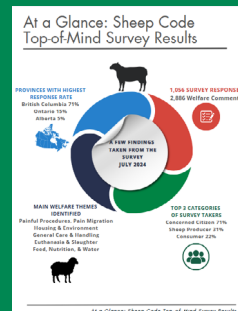
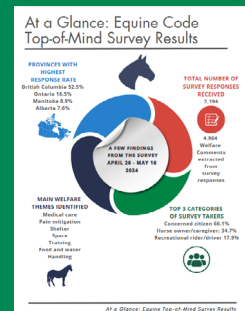
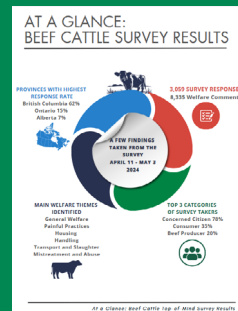


Top-of-Mind Survey

The Top-of-Mind survey conducted in [step 1](#) of the Code process ensures the Code Committee has a compiled list of the top concerns from all stakeholder groups on the table for discussion before they begin to deliberate on the content of the Code.

Click on the images in the sidebar to see the Top-of-Mind survey results for beef cattle; equine; sheep; and hatching eggs, breeders, chickens and turkeys. The pig top-of-mind survey will be available from the pig Code webpage by December 2025.

Top of Mind Survey Results



Pig Top-of-Mind survey results to be released December 2025!

Priority Welfare Issues

Priority Welfare Issues

[Scientific Committees](#) are assembled for each Code update/amendment to review the literature available on the priority welfare issues identified by the Code Committee at their first in-person meeting. These reports provide valuable information to the Code Committee members throughout their deliberations. Click on the links in the sidebar to see the priority welfare issues identified by the sectors that have reached this stage in their Code update: beef cattle; equine; sheep; and hatching eggs, breeders, chickens and turkeys.

Once the Code Committee has reached consensus on a draft of the Code the 60-day comment period begins. Everyone is encouraged to provide feedback, which is used in finalizing the Code.



NFACC FUNDAMENTALS

Collective Knowledge



Progress updates for each Code being updated or amended are published quarterly and can be found on each Code's webpage

Pullets and Laying Hens

Code Ammendment

Pullets and Laying Hens 5-Year Review and Code Amendment Released

The pullets and laying hens Code underwent a 5-year review that was completed in 2022 with a recommendation to amend the 2017 Code of Practice to address concerns in three key areas that were identified as needing revision or clarification:

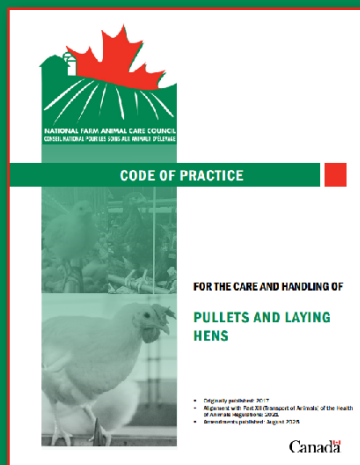
- Round feeder space for pullets and laying hens
- Minimum space allowance for pullets in multi-tier systems
- Maximum number of tiers allowed in rearing and laying facilities

In 2024, a 15-member Code (amendment) Committee (CC) was established, which included producers from across the country along with representatives from the processing sector, research community, animal welfare advocacy, the poultry veterinary sector, retailers, and government. A three-person scientific panel was established to review and summarize research on the three amendment topics. A comprehensive Scientific Report was peer-reviewed and then published in February, 2025. A link to this report can be found in the sidebar.

The CC met twice in-person and had multiple online meetings in advance the public comment period. The 60-day Public Comment Period ran from March 27 – May 26, 2025. In total, 166 submissions were received. The majority of participants indicated they were from Ontario (29%), with 22% from the United States, and 12% from Alberta. The top respondent categories were: concerned citizen/advocate; egg consumer; egg producer; animal welfare enforcement; and pullet grower.

The final Code with amendments was published July 31, 2025. Accompanying the Code was a *What We Heard and How We Addressed It* report (available in the sidebar) summarizing the feedback received during the comment period, along with how the CC considered the feedback in finalizing the Code. Some notable changes that came about as a result of the amendment process include:

- **Round Feeders**—For ease of use, a column was added to the table in section 1.1.3 (pullets) to specify requirements for minimum round feeder space for all birds in the rearing phase, as opposed to only specifying linear space and a footnote with a linear-to-round space conversion factor. In addition, two recommended practices were added to encourage producers to monitor feeding behaviour, and to ensure that augers are triggered manually when necessary to ensure that fresh feed is available in all pans. In section 2.3 (laying hens), the first requirement was amended to specify minimum feeder space for both linear and round feeders, as opposed to specifying linear space only with a formula for converting to round space.
- **Pullet Space Allowance**—The scope of this topic was limited to space allowance for pullets housed in multi-tier rearing systems from the age of 8 weeks. The minimum total space allowance requirement was increased by ~36% on a per-bird basis, most of which applied to litter space. The minimum space required to be allocated to litter was increased to nearly 2.5 times more than that required in the 2017 Code. In addition, a new Recommended Practice was added to reinforce the importance of providing additional space for birds that remain in the pullet barn after 17 weeks of age.
- **Maximum Number of Tiers**—The committee amended the glossary to revise one term (Terrace), and add a new term (Tier). In addition, the identical requirement that caps the number of tiers in both the pullet and laying hens sections was amended for clarity.



Scientific Committees

Informing the Codes

The evolving field of animal welfare science can affect and change how farmed animals are raised in Canada. Codes of Practice are reviewed at regular intervals to accommodate our growing scientific understanding of farm animal welfare. Code Committees examine the animal welfare science, balancing what's possible today while reaching for where we need to go tomorrow.

Scientific Committees are composed of leading scientific experts familiar with animal welfare research for the farmed animal species in question. Their primary task is to develop a peer-reviewed report based on the scientific literature relating to key priority welfare issues.

The Scientific Committee report provides scientific conclusions but not recommendations. This is based on the principle that *"Science can tell us what is... but not what ought to be."* The conclusions and cited research are used extensively by Code Committee members as they discuss the "what ought to be" regarding each section of the Code of Practice being developed or updated.

The exciting part of participating on a Scientific Committee is seeing the progression of research into practice. All science begins from a question and moves through the scientific process to hopefully become published research that advances knowledge and serves society. Scientific Committee members get to see research from their colleagues, and sometimes their own research, become part of welfare standards and regular management practices on farm.



For example, pain control for painful conditions and procedures was identified as a priority welfare issues for the recent dairy cattle Code update. Since the 2009 dairy cattle Code was published, there have been many studies published regarding mastitis and pain and the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) therapy. After reviewing the scientific literature the Scientific Committee concluded, "there is a strong body of evidence supporting use of NSAID therapy for severe mastitis to reduce inflammation and indicators of pain." This conclusion led to a new requirement in the 2023 dairy cattle Code, "5.6 Systemic analgesia must be included in the treatment of cows with severe acute clinical mastitis." Many dairy farmers use NSAIDs to treat severe acute clinical mastitis already, but adding it as a requirement in the Code helps to ensure this painful condition is addressed consistently across all Canadian dairy farms.

Dairy Farmers of Canada's proAction program is also in the process of being updated. The proposed changes that will come into effect in April 2027 have been tested on dairy farms. One new proAction requirement will be to include a standard operating procedure for treating severe acute clinical mastitis with a systemic analgesic. With the addition of this requirement in 2027, Dairy Farmers of Canada will be able to state that this is a required and implemented procedure across Canada.

Presentation Highlight



NFACC's Division Director spoke at Humane Canada's 2025 Summit for Animals



There have been 14 Codes developed through NFACC to date — two of which were firsts for Canada!

New Videos

Dedicated to Advancing
Farm Animal Care



The Importance of NFACC

Better Outcomes, Smarter Decisions
Improved Care



Diversity Leads to Better Decisions

Interests of all Involved are
Represented and Respected



Importance of Consensus



Cover image photo credits: top left photo: Egg Farmers of Canada; top middle photo: Canadian Cattle Association; top right photo: Turkey Farmers of Canada; bottom left photo: Canadian Sheep Federation; bottom middle photo: Canadian Pork Council; bottom right photo: C. DuBois

Get to Know the Fundamentals of NFACC

Watch our two-minute videos (clickable from the sidebar) to discover:

- ✓ What makes NFACC an important forum for advancing farm animal welfare
- ✓ How diversity can lead to better decision making
- ✓ What is consensus decision making and how does it work at NFACC

NFACC plays an essential role, supporting groups in bridging differences on farm animal welfare. Collaboration and consensus are cornerstones for making achievable advances that meet the needs of animals and the people who care for them.

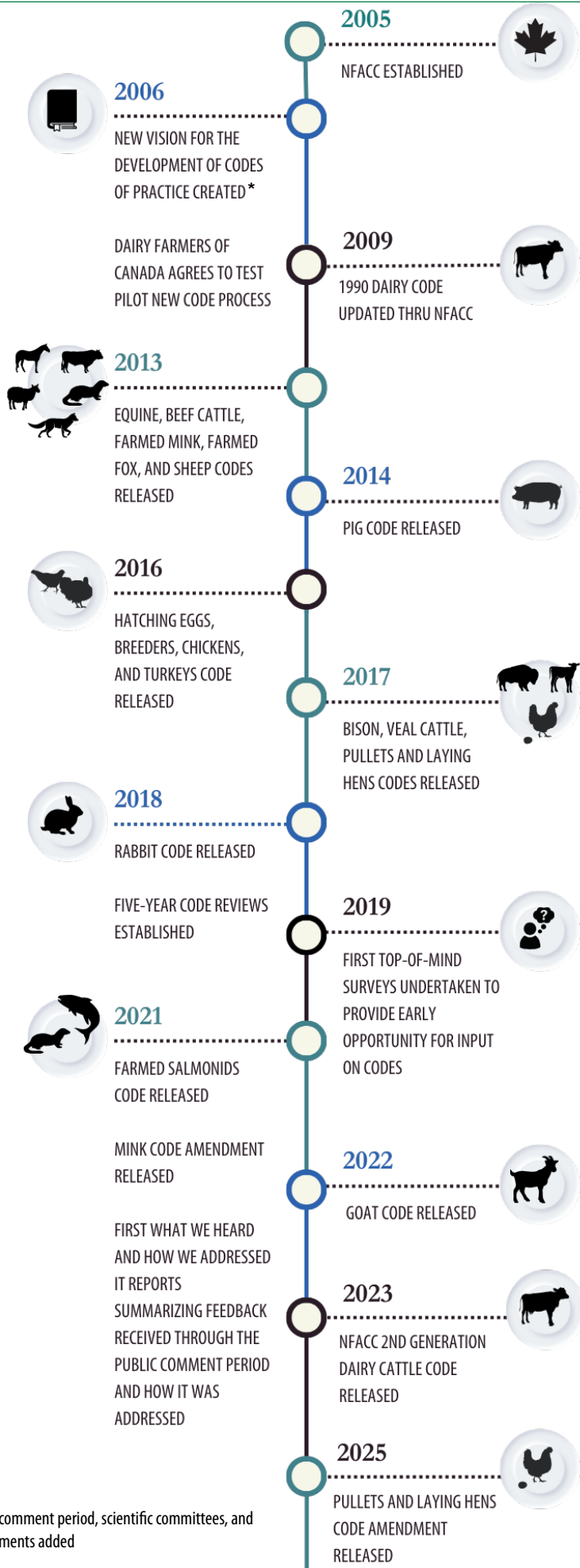


Consensus is not about one side winning and another side losing. It is about finding a solution that recognizes and integrates the interests of all participants.



Diversity helps us shift from asking, "Who is right?" to "What does animal welfare look like if each of us has a valid perspective?"

Historical Timeline



* e.g. public comment period, scientific committees, and Code requirements added

NFACC Website Traffic

Top 3 NFACC Code Pages Visited

1. Dairy Cattle Code of Practice
2. Poultry Code of Practice
3. Equine Code of Practice



Photo credit: ACER Consulting

Top 4 PDF Downloads



Active Users by Country

