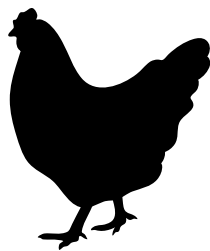


At a Glance: Poultry Code Top-of-Mind Survey Results



LOCATIONS WITH HIGHEST RESPONSE RATE

British Columbia 51%
United States 17%
Ontario 15%
Alberta 5%



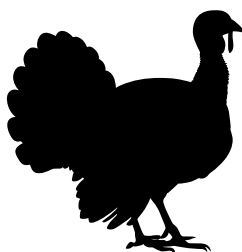
1,582 SURVEY RESPONSES
4,372 Welfare Comments



**A FEW FINDINGS
TAKEN FROM THE
SURVEY
OCTOBER 2024**

MAIN WELFARE THEMES IDENTIFIED

- Stocking Density
- General Living Conditions
- Euthanasia, Depopulation & Slaughter
- Outdoor Access
- Enrichment
- Breed and Growth Rate
- Physical Alterations & Pain Management



TOP 3 CATEGORIES OF SURVEY TAKERS

General Public 76%
Animal Welfare Advocate 28%
Poultry Consumer 17%



Background

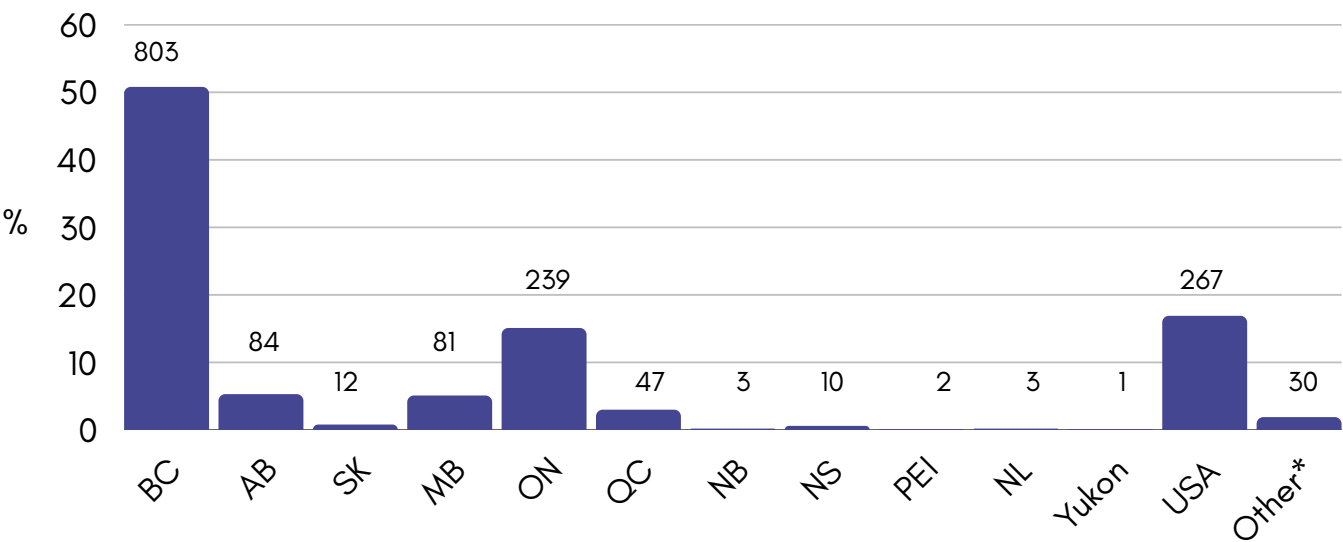
Turkey Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, the Canadian Hatching Egg Producers, and Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors have collectively initiated a revision to the 2016 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chickens and Turkeys using the process coordinated 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 hatching eggs, breeders, chickens and turkeys raised for meat in Canada.

Survey

From October 4 through November 8, 2024, industry members, general population, and any other interested individuals were invited to participate in a survey to provide any top-of-mind thoughts around poultry 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?

Location of Residence and Percent of Responses



*Other responses included Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada (unspecified province/territory), Czech Republic, Europe (unspecified country), France, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

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	18	1%
Animal welfare advocate	445	28%
Animal welfare enforcement	105	7%
Broiler breeder producer	43	3%
Broiler producer	50	3%
Educator	88	6%
General public	1208	76%
Government	29	2%
Hatchery	51	3%
Non-commercial producer (i.e no quota)	92	6%
Producer - other commodity	30	2%
Poultry consumer	270	17%
Poultry nutritionist / feed mill	29	2%
Primary breeder	40	3%
Processor	32	2%
Researchers / scientist	47	3%
Retail and/or food service	26	2%
Transporter	35	2%
Turkey breeder producer	40	3%
Turkey producer	49	3%
Veterinarian	49	3%
Other	55	4%

What was top-of-mind?

From the 1,582 survey responses received, 4,372 individual welfare comments were extracted, and from those, 7 predominant welfare concerns were identified.



1. Stocking density

Many respondents were concerned about overcrowded living conditions and the ability for birds to be able to move freely in their environment. There were many calls to increase space allowance for birds. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Increase minimum space requirements."

"Increasing available space per bird, i.e. reduced density."

"Intensive farming environment- overcrowding and unsanitary conditions."

"Lower bird stocking density, providing space to move freely exhibit natural behaviors."

"Minimizing stocking density (31 kg/m² should be the maximum in any condition)."

"Overcrowding: increase & enrich environment to allow natural behaviours."

"Please establish a lower stocking density limit."

"Please give birds ample roam in areas that are enriching for their species."

2. General living conditions

General environment and living conditions were among the top comments. Grouped in this category were also comments about natural living, factory farming, and humane treatment. There were also calls to ban the use of cages, even though poultry raised for meat in Canada are not housed in cages. A few comments in this category spoke specifically about eliminating the use of wire flooring, which may only pertain to broiler breeder or turkey breeder housing. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Chickens cramped together in small wire cages."

"Ending the use of cages."

"The confinement to tiny cages for life is unnatural."

"No industrial production of chicken or turkeys – need old way of farming."

"Factory farms should be eliminated."

"Better inside barn environment to allow for natural behaviours."

"Clean and humane lodgings with adequate space for all."

"All of these birds need to be treated humanely in all aspects of their care."

"Ensuring chickens and turkeys are treated humanely throughout their life."

"Humane care and consideration throughout the full growing period."

"Poultry that provide food to humans should be treated with absolute respect/care."

"That the animals are treated humanely in all moments of their life and death."

"These animals are forced to live in terrible, inhumane, conditions."

"Living conditions right up until animals are killed needs to be taken into account."

"Better animal welfare and treat them as living beings. Give them a natural way to live."

"I want all chickens and turkeys to have as natural a life as possible."

"Providing good conditions of living space with natural environment and activities."

3. Euthanasia, depopulation and slaughter

Not surprisingly, end-of-life care was top-of-mind for many respondents. Participants were concerned about routine on-farm euthanasia methods as well as mass depopulation methods used during disease outbreaks or emergencies. Slaughter methods were also of concern, in particular, attention was given to pre-stun handling and live shackling. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Culling practices and welfare of birds during disease outbreaks."

"Humane methods ONLY for depopulation and euthanasia are to be used."

"No euthanasia by blunt force; decapitation; cervical dislocation; water or foam; VSD."

"Restrict depopulation methods to only humane protocols to minimize suffering."

"End: manual BFT, gassing, CO, nitrogen foam, ventilation shutdown."

"Euthanasia has to be humane, unlike the current methods like CO2 or suffocation."

"Stop cruel killing methods such as manual blunt force trauma & decapitation."

"Ban live shackle slaughter and use controlled atmosphere stunning instead."

"Inhumane slaughter methods - shackle slaughter."

"It's beyond time to require gas stunning in crates: it benefits both workers and birds."

4. Outdoor access

Survey respondents frequently mentioned the importance of allowing birds access to an outdoor space. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"All birds deserve access to natural outdoor areas with space for movement."

"All poultry should have access to an outdoor area."

"Be sure they are actually free-run and get outdoor time."

"Chickens/turkeys should be outside & not in an overcrowded pen their entire lives."

"Ensuring significant and proper access to free range."

"Outdoor free range with plenty of space to spread their wings."

"Provide access to outdoors & richer environment, shade & grassy areas."

"Natural light, access to the outdoors."

"Fresh air and access to outside and sun."

5. Enrichment

Many were concerned with the barren environments in which birds are housed and wanted to see more complex or enriched environments provided. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"At least two types of enrichments should be required (not recommended)."

"Barren on farm environments."

"Enriched environment to reduce stress, strengthen bones, reduce feather pecking."

"Enrichment – including time outdoors and opportunities for natural bird behaviours."

"Enrichment (perches, access to outdoors, foraging material) mandatory."

"Enrichment is crucial, it should be provided on a mandatory basis."

"Environmental enrichment for broilers, turkeys, broiler and turkey breeders."

"Make it mandatory to provide enrichment to these intelligent birds."

"Providing enrichment for birds during their lifetime. Chickens are quite smart."

"Their environment must contain enrichment and perches, access to natural light."

"Provision of enrichment items; things they can explore, peck, perching."

"Improve conditions by requiring access to outdoor, perches, natural light and darkness."

6. Breed and growth rate

Many people expressed concerns about the welfare issues associated with fast growth, and especially fast growth due to genetics. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Accelerated growth and size causing pain, leg and foot issues."

"Ban fast-growing breeds that have been linked to serious health problems."

"Breeding chickens that are physically incapable of holding up their own body weight."

"Fast growing breeds should be banned. Shouldn't have birds who can't walk/stand."

"Find & actually use slower growing breeds for chickens to reduce harm & improve quality."

"Genetic Selection results in broilers and turkeys growing too fast – outcome cruel."

"Introduce slower growing, healthier chicken breeds instead."

"Limit growth rate to ensure foot and leg health."

"Phase out ultrafast-growing breeds. Introduce slower-growing chicken breeds."

"Slow growing breeds/limit growth rates, euthanasia methods."

7. Physical alterations and pain management

Not surprisingly, physical alterations were top of mind for many respondents. People were concerned about the practices performed regularly in general and some suggested requiring pain management. Below are some sample comments:

Quotes:

"Chickens and turkeys have personalities and feel pain."

"Not being exposed to any painful situations during the animal's life."

"Ban or provide pain control for all physical alterations to chickens + turkeys."

"Pain relief provided for procedure that are painful & cause distress to chicken/turkey."

"Physical alterations should be discontinued or effective pain management provided."

"Abuse done the animals without meds - beak trimming, etc."

"Anesthetics should be used for any painful procedure, such as trimming beaks."

"Give chickens what they need and debeaking, toe trimming, and snood are unnecessary."

"Physical procedures like beak-trimming and toe removal are not acceptable."

"Beak trimming and toe clipping without pain management."

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 were as follows:

Overall care and welfare	Exercise
Feed and water	Stress and fear
Health and disease management	Product handling and labelling
Daylength and natural light	Sustainability
Catching and handling	Safety
Cruelty	Disaster preparedness
Antibiotic, hormone and other medication use	Turkey welfare
natural behaviour	Flock size
Chick care (including culling of male chicks)	Breeding and genetics
Transport	Overconsumption of poultry
Hygiene	Animal rights
Foot and leg health	Organic production
Audits and enforcement	Force feeding
Abolition of farming	Moulting
Air quality	Cost of production
Vet care and vet access	Down production
Litter quality	Rehoming of spent hens
Hatching	Parasite control
GMO use	Noise
Broiler breeder care and feeding	Pesticide use
Education and training	Biosecurity
Considerations for workers	

How will the survey results be used?

The input received during this survey period is a valuable part of the Code development process. Collaboration between all stakeholders is important and the insight provided from the survey helps inform the Code Committee. The revision process is careful, considerate, intentional, and rigorous, encompassing all aspects of on-farm care for poultry, while emphasizing key welfare issues.

Next steps...

Once the Code Committee produces a draft revised 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!

Thanks to all respondents for sharing your concerns, thoughts, and suggestions related to poultry care and welfare. Your voices and opinions play an essential role as the Code Committee initiates the updates to the Code that reflect current concerns about poultry welfare.

For more information on NFACC and the Code development process, please visit www.nfacc.ca.

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