Codes of Practice: A Collaborative Model for Defining and Guiding Animal Welfare

A Perspective from the National Farm Animal Care Council: Major Wins for the Industry

Since its inception, NFACC has had a mandate to bring together a diverse set of industry partners in a consensus-based effort to develop a set of evidence-based requirements and recommendations that aim to guide farm animal care and welfare for each farmed animal species in Canada. Codes of Practice exist for many of the major livestock commodity groups in Canada, amongst others beef cattle, poultry, equines, dairy cattle, and pigs. Each Code is developed through a collaborative effort from the Code Development Committee and Scientific Committee, who inform the expectations of each document through a scientific, practical, and the animal humane movement. Codes of Practice are systematically updated and/or revised on a pre-established timeline, which ensures continuous evolution as science around best practice evolves. This process can be lengthy and includes collaboration and deliberation from various industry representatives within, and exterior to, the NFACC. The public are provided an opportunity to comment on a draft version of the Code, which adds a layer of transparency and ensures voices across the supply chain are considered.

NFACC General Manager, Jackie Wepruk, discussed some of the major successes that the NFACC has experienced in recent years. The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens was newly developed in 2017. This Code focused on hen welfare, with the Committee staying true to focus in this area. As this is a very technical Code, development of this document within a timely manner was seen as a great success for the industry. For the NFACC, creating achievable Codes within a timely manner improves trust from industry stakeholders, which allows the industry to move forward in adopting and implementing best on-farm practices as recommended within each Code of Practice. The successes achieved with this Laying Hen Code of Practice were seen as a win for the poultry industry, as participants representing this sector now stand behind this comprehensive guide for animal care.

In addition to updated Codes in the poultry industry, the NFACC has newly developed the first ever Code of Practice

for the Care and Handling of Rabbits in 2018, and a Code of Practice for Farmed Salmonids in 2021. The latter Code of Practice is the first Code of its kind in Canada for the care and welfare of fish and was celebrated throughout the supply chain as a method of recognizing the importance of fish welfare. Looking forward, the NFACC is working towards developing the First Code for Goats and Livestock Transport and updating and revising the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle.

An Industry Perspective on Codes of Practice in Guiding Animal Welfare

Industry groups have been working towards developing, revising, and implementing Codes of Practice within their respective sectors. Groups such as Equestrian Canada (**EC**) and the Turkey Farmers of Canada (**TFC**) are currently working on rolling out animal welfare assurance programs that use their respective Codes as a foundation for on-farm expectations. More specifically, EC has been working towards creating an equine quality assurance program that mirrors the recommendations from the Equine Code of Practice to highlight equine welfare based on the idea of continuous improvement The TFC have made major strides towards the implementation of the Flock Care Program, a quality

assurance program for turkeys that complements the Code of Practice for Chickens, Turkeys, and Breeders.

The Canadian Pork Council (**CPC**) provide an excellent example of an industry group that is working towards updating and revising their current Code of Practice. The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs was released in 2014 reviewed again 5 years later. Amendments proposed during this review process are still under review. Although to date a full consensus on the proposed Code revisions has not yet been achieved, work continues. Updates to currently existing Codes can be more challenging than an initial Code development. Additionally, it can be difficult to incorporate each Code into existing QA programs within the industry. It is important to discuss the challenges associated with industry progress because despite the difficulties associated with moving forward, progress is still being made and lessons learned through successes of Code development for differing species can be used to inform future processes.

Canadian Pork Council
Conseil canadien du porc

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