



Proactive approach

How to ensure your farm measures up to Code of Practice for dairy cattle care

A quick, easy-to-use checklist can compare the way you care for your cattle with best management and welfare practices recommended across Canada. It lets you assess your practices and the environment you provide for your animals to ensure you comply with the recently updated *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*.

Producer representatives and the National Farm Animal Care Council spent several months updating the Code, published in the spring of 2009. The assessment tool, available online at Dairy Farmers of Canada's (DFC) website at www.dairyfarmers.ca, is one of several products resulting from the update.

Sent to all Canadian dairy producers last June, the comprehensive Code provides guidelines, recommendations and requirements for dairy cattle care and handling. Subjects include housing, management, transportation, processing and animal husbandry practices.

The science-based Code formalizes and strengthens recommendations and requirements contained in the document. Requirements are new to the Code and can refer to either a regulatory requirement or an industry-imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices. Recommended best practices strive for continuous improvement, and encourage producers to provide a higher level of care for their animals.

Promotion and implementation of the Code on farms is critical for the dairy industry. A consensus document on animal care, it reflects the industry's values and, to some extent, views held by our society.

care and welfare on farms, enforcement of Code compliance will vary from province to province. In Ontario, for example, the *Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* refers to the care of agricultural animals according to reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry. In this case, the Code serves as the industry standard by which generally accepted practices would be measured and the basis on which the act could be enforced.

Ongoing communications about the Code and specific changes made in the updated version will continue during the year. DFC, in collaboration with industry experts, will explain the importance of the changes and the scientific basis on which they were made.

DFC's board of directors expects the Code's implementation should be seamless across the country. You are encouraged to use the self-assessment tool to measure compliance and implement the recommended best practices.

The Code demonstrates strong leadership and a proactive approach to animal care and welfare in the Canadian dairy industry. It has signaled our industry's strong commitment to the care and humane treatment of our animals. 

Shelley Crabtree is DFC's acting assistant director, communications and policy.

Dairy Animal Welfare: On-Farm Assessment

The following are requirements of the Code of Practice and farmers are expected to adhere to these practices. This checklist is intended for farmers to use in evaluating their practices and the environment they provide their calves and cows.

The numbers for each requirement links back to the section of the Code of Practice where the requirements and best practices are outlined.

You can choose N/A when a situation does not apply to your particular farm (no bull on farm, no branding, etc...)



CALVES				
CALF BARN				
1.1.1	Calves have a bed that provides comfort, insulation, warmth, dryness and traction: bare concrete is not acceptable as a resting surface.	YES	NO	
	Housing allows calves to easily stand up, lie down, turn around and adopt normal resting postures.	YES	NO	
	Calves have visual contact with other calves.	YES	NO	
	The bedded area for group-housed calves is large enough to allow all calves to rest comfortably at the same time.	YES	NO	N/A
CALF HANDLING				
4.3	Disbudding and Dehorning Pain control is used when disbudding or disbudding. (It is recommended to disbud before calf is 3 weeks of age.)	YES	NO	N/A
	Bleeding control is used when dehorning.	YES	NO	N/A
4.4	Identification All cattle are identified using an approved ear tag as stipulated by regulations.	YES	NO	

A checklist assessment is available online at www.dairyfarmers.ca.

Consequently, the industry, governments, animal care groups and provincial farm animal councils will use the Code as the key document on the best approach to care for dairy animals. Some provinces will reference the Code in their provincial animal welfare legislation. In the past, Codes have been used in courts as a reference.

Given the Code's status in provincial legislation and its use as a tool to evaluate best practices for animal