

## Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals

# Beef cattle

### THE CODES OF PRACTICE:

The Codes of Practice are nationally developed guidelines for the care and handling of different species of farm animals. Codes are not intended to be used as production manuals; instead, the Codes are designed to be used as an educational tool in the promotion of acceptable management and welfare practices. The Codes contain recommendations to assist farmers and others in the agriculture and food sector to compare and improve their own management practices.

### THE BEEF CODE:

The Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef cattle was developed from an original working draft contracted by the Ontario Cattleman's Association to Dr. Frank Hurnick, Professor, Poultry and Animal Science, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, in the early 1980's. This draft was submitted to all provincial cattle organizations for review and input. As a result, the recommended code of practice for beef cattle was printed in 1991.

The code is intended to achieve a workable balance between the best interest of the animals and the producers. It recognizes the basic principles that humaneness towards animals is a prime consideration and that animals treated well and protected from stress benefit producers.

People who are interested in beef cattle should obtain a copy of the code in its entirety.

This factsheet only highlights a small amount of the information found in the complete Code of Practice for beef cattle.



The complete Beef Cattle Code can be viewed at <http://www.carc-crac.ca>

## HIGHLIGHTS:

### Shelter and housing

- ! It is beyond the scope of this code to describe all shelter and housing facilities used in cattle production. Individuals requiring further details should refer to local sources of information such as universities, agricultural ministries and local successful beef producers.
- ! The design and use of shelter facilities for beef cattle should promote the health, well-being and good performance of animals at all stages of their lives.
- ! Natural or constructed shelter areas should adequately protect animals from weather fluctuations characteristic of the region.
- ! Feedlots and paddocks used during cold seasons must have adequate windbreaks to reduce wind speed hence the wind-chill effect on cattle. Table 1 gives the wind-chill factors.

**Table 1 Wind-chill factors**

Wind speed (km/h)	Actual air temperature (°C)						
	10	4	-1	-7	-12	-18	-23
8	9	2	-3	-8	-15	-21	-26
16	4	-2	-8	-15	-22	-29	-34
24	2	-5	-12	-21	-28	-34	-41
32	0	-8	-16	-23	-31	-37	-45
40	-1	-9	-18	-26	-33	-39	-48
48	-2	-11	-21	-28	-36	-42	-51
56	-3	-12	-21	-29	-37	-44	-54
64	-3	-12	-22	-29	-38	-47	-56
72	-4	-13	-22	-30	-39	-48	-57
80	-4	-13	-23	-31	-40	-48	-58

- ! Housing facilities should be designed and constructed to ensure the animals' comfort and to enhance their good health.
- ! In all types of housing systems, cattle should be free to stand up and lie down comfortably at all times.

### Feed and Water:

- ! Diets for all classes of beef cattle should be formulated in accordance with the recommendations of the National Research Council (US) subcommittee on beef cattle nutrition in *Nutrient requirements*

*of beef cattle.*

- ! Cattle should have access to fresh, clean water at all times. The average daily demand for cattle weighing 500 kg (1100 lb) is about 45 L and increases in hot weather up to 90 L.
- ! Adequate feed must be provided regularly.
- ! When cattle are fed in groups, all animals must have access to feed. Whenever restricted feeding is practiced, all animals should have simultaneous access to the feeders so that they may eat at the same time.

### **Pastures:**

- ! Cattle on pasture should be inspected regularly, paying particular attention during high-risk periods (e.g., seasonal change, calving and introduction of new animals to the herd).
- ! Cattle on pasture should have access to sufficient quantity and quality of feed and water.
- ! Salt and mineral as required should be available at all times.
- ! All fences, including electric fences, on pastures and ranges should be safe and maintained in good, functional order.
- ! Cattle on pasture or range should have access to a well drained resting area and to natural or constructed shelter.

### **Calves:**

- ! Present beef cattle management dictates that most calves remain with their mothers for at least five months after birth.
- ! Particularly during the first month of life, calves should be observed regularly (preferably daily) to ensure that they are adequately nourished and healthy.

### **Herd Management:**

- ! Everyone working with cattle or managing animal facilities must understand and accept their responsibility to prevent unnecessary suffering of animals.
- ! An important skill of cattlemen is the ability to recognize early signs of distress or disease in animals so that the cause can be identified and prompt, appropriate action taken.

## **Herd Health Management:**

- ! All animals and facilities should be inspected routinely, and if necessary, appropriate action should be taken immediately.
- ! Distressed cattle should be dealt with humanely, effectively and promptly to prevent suffering. Abnormal health conditions must receive proper treatment. Sick, injured or disabled cattle in severe distress should not be subjected to the rigors of loading and transportation. These animals should be euthanized or slaughtered on the farm. Under no circumstances should sick, injured or disabled animals be transported either to livestock auction markets or long distances to meat packers.

## **Auction Markets:**

- ! Market operators should refuse to accept animals that are clearly not in condition to be moved through their facilities without further injury or stress.

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All Codes are presently developed by a review committee made up of representatives from farm groups, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, animal scientists, federal and provincial governments, related agricultural sectors and interested individuals. The following are some of the individuals that provided input at various stages in the drafting of this code.

- ! Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- ! Canadian Cattlemen's Association and Affiliated Provincial Cattlemen's Organizations
- ! Canadian Council on Animal Care
- ! Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
- ! Canadian Society of Animal Science
- ! Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
- ! Livestock Markets Association of Canada
- ! University of Guelph

In 1995, the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC) and its Canada Committee on Animals and its Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour, took the lead, along with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies in updating existing codes and developing new commodity codes.

Further information on the process of Code Development can be obtained from the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council (CARC), Heritage House, Building 60, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C6.

Request for copies of the Codes can be addressed to the national commodity group and/or specific provincial organizations.

This factsheet was prepared by Penny Lawlis, Animal Care Inspector, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, with the assistance of an Editorial Committee. Animal welfare factsheets have been printed and distributed through the financial support of your provincial agriculture department.