

## **Auditing Animal Welfare on Farms What can we measure?**

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**Health, Nutrition and Food Safety**



**Environment**



**Animal Welfare**

### **Documentation of Animal Welfare Standards**

- Certification programs for specialty labeling
- Quality assurance schemes
- Animal welfare audits by retailers

**What impact will there be on  
Canadian food animal industries?**

## Report from the George Morris Centre September 2002

- Although Canadian food animal industries have not (yet) felt the pressure from food retailers, “commodity groups... should move ahead with developing compatible animal welfare standards and auditable programs to implement those standards”

Farmscape News - December 16, 2002

Bryan Walton, Vice President, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors indicated that as part of the North American System the Canadian food animal industry must also pay attention to this issue

“By enlarge, Canadians, I think, should know that our farmers are doing a pretty good job. I think the progressive producers recognize that this is a trend and it won’t go away and it’s part of progress.”

Bryan Walton, Vice President  
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors

## Animal Welfare Verification in Canada ...



## Goals

- Types of measures used to assess welfare
- Different approaches that can be used to assess welfare in practical settings
- Some examples of on-farm assessment tools

## Key Issues

- Practices resulting in pain, hunger, fear, distress
- Environments that lead to physical or behavioural abnormalities
- Housing involving severe restriction of movement

(David Fraser, 2002)

## Indicators of Welfare Used in Research

Health, injury, disease, mortality

Physiological responses to stress

Growth, reproduction, immune function

Behaviour

## Assessing Welfare in Practical Settings

“Engineering”, “design” or “resource”

- Specific standards for housing, procedures

“Performance”, “animal-based” or “outcome”

- Measures of animal responses and reactions

## Design Standards

**Prescriptions** for features of the environment or practices that are generally thought to promote welfare



## Design Standards

- Space allowance, cage size, numbers of feeders and drinkers, temperature requirements...

- Age or techniques for castration, dehorning, beak trimming, methods for euthanasia, training requirements for stockpeople...

## Design Standards

### Advantages:

- Relatively easy to assess
- Can serve as a good basis for problem solving

### Disadvantages:

- Don't really assess **welfare**
- Don't account for the level of care, attention to detail ... **the stockperson**

## Animal-Based Standards

Biological responses **of the animal** to housing and procedures



## Animal-Based Standards

Health - disease, injury, mortality

Physical condition/appearance

- cleanliness, skin lesions, body condition

Behavioural responses

- ease of movement, signs of pain or fear

## Animal-Based Standards

### Advantages:

- **Direct measures** of welfare
- Allow for flexibility in housing, management

### Disadvantages:

- More difficult, time consuming
- May indicate a problem but not the source

## Assessment Tools

May emphasize “design” or “animal-based” measures or some combination of both

Must be carefully developed to be

**valid**

**reliable**

**repeatable**

## Assessment Tools

- Checklists (yes/no) to determine whether standards are being met
- Counting or scoring of different criteria
- Indexing systems

## Assessment Tools

### Indexing systems

- Series of criteria that are scored
- Different criteria given different weights
- Scores are combined for an overall score
- Allows for deficiencies in some areas to be offset by strengths in other areas

## Assessment Tools

### Nature of the tool depends on the goals

- Certification
  - Labeling of specialty products
- Meeting minimum required standards
- Increasing awareness of “best practices”

## Some Examples

## Animal Needs Index ANI 35 - Austria



Bartussek, et al., Federal Ministry of Agriculture

### ANI 35

- In development in Austria since 1985
- Purpose
  - Certification for organic labeling
  - Combination of animal welfare, human health, organic standards

### ANI 35

Index that considers five components:

- Possibility of mobility
- Social contact
- Condition of floors
- Climate (ventilation, light, noise)
- Stockmanship

### ANI 35- Example for cattle

Possibility of mobility/locomotion

- Floor space allowance
- Access to pasture for exercise
- Ease of standing and lying (observation)

### ANI 35- Example for cattle

Stockmanship

- Cleanliness of facility and animals
- Condition of equipment
- Condition of skin, hooves

## Animal Needs Index ANI 35 - Austria



## Animal Welfare Audit Australia



Barnett, et al., Rural Industries R & D Corp.

## Australian Animal Welfare Audit

- Chicken Meat Industry Audit
- Completed 2001
- Purpose
  - to provide documented evidence of high quality animal care
  - to increase awareness of personnel

## Australian Animal Welfare Audit

- Questionnaire (yes/no) of animal care activities and equipment monitoring
- Questions are
  - **Critical:** must be complied with to pass
  - **Good practice**
  - **Hard to verify**
- Excerpts from Codes of Practice

## Australian Animal Welfare Audit

- Sections on routine husbandry, equipment, housing, staff and training
  - Were birds checked at least 4 times daily?
  - Were mortalities within targets?
  - Were drinkers regularly adjusted?
  - Was there a smell of ammonia in the shed?

## Animal Welfare Audit Australia



**Swine Welfare Assurance Program**  
**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**  
**National Pork Board, USA**



Advisory group of 12 scientists

**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**

**Voluntary program launched in 2003**

**An educational tool to help pork producers to:**

- Objectively assess and track their pigs' welfare
- Show packers, retailers and consumers that pigs' welfare is important

**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**

- Applicable to all types of production systems
- Animal-based



**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**

- Records
  - Health, husbandry, mortality, euthanasia
  - Documentation of caretaker training
  - Daily logs of barn checks

**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**

- Observation
  - % lame, lesions, wounds, scratches
  - Body condition scores
  - Animal response to humans (standardized approach test)

**SWAP<sup>SM</sup>**

- Facilities
  - Warning/alarm system, hospital pens
  - Pen space
  - Condition of floors, fencing, equipment
  - Feeder/water allotment

**Swine Welfare Assurance Program  
SWAP<sup>SM</sup>  
National Pork Board, USA**



**Animal Welfare Verification in  
Canada ...**



**Recommended codes of practice for the  
care and handling of farm animals**



**Why aren't the Codes of Practice  
sufficient for demonstrating the level  
of animal care provided on Canadian  
farms?**

**Codes of Practice**

Do provide guidelines for housing and management - design standards

**BUT**

Producers' use and awareness of them is sometimes questioned

**AND**

Many parts are not auditable as written

**Canadian Pork Council**

- Formed the Animal Care Working Group (2002)
- Developing auditable points which can be added to the CQA on-farm food safety program
- When possible, Code of Practice is used as guideline or educational tool

## Chicken Farmers of Canada

- Established an Animal Care Committee (2003)
- Appointed Animal Care Coordinator
- Developing auditable animal care standards based on Code of Practice and criteria for evaluating on-farm compliance

## Canadian Egg Marketing Agency

- Developed a rating program to monitor layer welfare (2003)
- As of July, CEMA testing a pilot project



## Animal Welfare Verification in Canada is Moving Ahead

