



NATIONAL FARM ANIMAL CARE COUNCIL  
CONSEIL NATIONAL POUR LES SOINS AUX ANIMAUX D'ÉLEVAGE

# Advancing **Animal Welfare** and **Public Trust** Through Codes of Practice

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 2018-MARCH 2021

CANADIAN  
AGRICULTURAL  
PARTNERSHIP

PARTENARIAT  
CANADIEN pour  
l'AGRICULTURE

Canada 

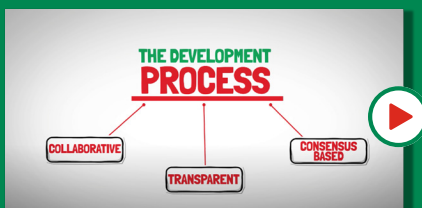
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“Relationships are a key part of the Code development process as committee members work together towards the common goal of producing a Code of Practice.”

### The Codes of Practice Development Process



## Perseverance in Advancing Farm Animal Care

During 2020-2021, progress continued in the “*Advancing Animal Welfare and Public Trust Through Codes of Practice*” project under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership to update the following Codes:

- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Livestock and Poultry: Transportation
- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle
- Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Goats

Simultaneously, a new Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Salmonids was drafted in collaboration with the [Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance](#).

Several other Codes underwent [five-year reviews](#) ([Beef Cattle](#), [Equines](#), [Farmed Fox](#), and [Sheep](#)). The [Farmed Mink](#) and [Pig](#) Codes initiated Code amendments after completing their respective reviews. The five-year review is a chance to ask the question, “how’s the Code working for you?” and to ensure that Codes remain relevant and achievable.

Like most organizations, NFACC was impacted by the COVID-19 virus. Nonetheless, progress continued by adapting full-day in-person meetings into multiple shorter virtual sessions and re-evaluating each Code’s timeline. This deviation from everyday working practices involved a steep learning curve for our committee members, managers, and members.

Relationships are a key part of the Code development process as committee members work together towards the common goal of producing a Code of Practice. We acknowledge that building relationships can be difficult using a virtual format, often while living in a rural area with poor connection and, in some cases, also operating a farm. Not to mention the struggle that is being productive while facing screen fatigue. This illustrates the commitment that these individuals make to NFACC and their determination to improve farm animal care and welfare.

### Expanding Public Input

NFACC endeavours to continually improve its processes and remain transparent. A review of the [Public Comment Period](#) was conducted in 2017 to assess its transparency and legitimacy. Recommendations from that review were implemented to enhance the whole process.

A significant change was made to how a Code’s development process begins. Before the first Code Committee meeting, a preliminary survey is now developed to collect top-of-mind issues, priorities, and concerns.

These top-of-mind surveys provide the public with an additional opportunity to provide input before a Code development process is truly underway. This new proactive approach provides Code committees with a general sense of species-specific welfare issues that may warrant particular attention within the Code. Preliminary surveys were used for the Dairy Cattle, Farmed Salmonids, Goats, and Transportation Codes and have contributed to Code committee deliberations.

### Advancing Animal Welfare from a New Home

NFACC was born through the [Canadian Animal Health Coalition](#) (CAHC) in 2005, and there it grew into a confident leader in farm animal care and welfare in Canada. However, as organizations evolve, new opportunities arise.

On April 1, 2020, NFACC transitioned from the CAHC and became a division of the [National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare](#) (NFAHW) Council. We are incredibly grateful to the CAHC for creating an environment where NFACC could grow and for facilitating this smooth transition. We are looking forward to working with the NFAHW Council to enhance animal welfare and further NFACC’s reach going forward.

  
Ryder Lee  
NFACC Chairman



# Enhancing the Code Development Process

## Code Maintenance Process

Each Code of Practice is the product of NFACC's comprehensive Code development process that considers the best science available and is shaped through stakeholder input. To remain relevant and up to date with ever-evolving science and technology, Codes are reviewed every five years with the aim of updating them every ten years.

The five-year review is an opportunity to reflect on progress made since the Code's creation or last update, to identify any challenges, and to determine the relative priority level for a next Code update. A review can result in:

- ◆ Reaffirmation of the Code (i.e., no changes)
- ◆ Recommendation to initiate a Code update with proposed timelines
- ◆ Recommendation to initiate Code amendments (i.e., focused on a limited set of topics or sections within a Code that need to be addressed).

The [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Mink](#) completed its five-year review in 2018 and is undergoing amendments as per challenges identified in the Code review. Meanwhile, the [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs](#) is undergoing a combined review and amendment.

## Public Comment Period

With the initiation of the "Advancing Animal Welfare and Public Trust Through Codes of Practice" project, new features were introduced to the Code development process, expanding opportunities for broader input. These changes were made in response to a formal review of the [Public Comment Period](#) (PCP).

An initial survey is now conducted before the Code Committee has met to collect top-of-mind animal welfare concerns that the committee should ensure are addressed. The survey offers an early opportunity for stakeholders to feed their priorities into the Code development process. Survey results are summarized in a public-facing document, supporting NFACC's transparency to the public. The Farmed Salmonids, Goats, Dairy, and Transportation Codes have undergone this survey process and the results are being considered as part of each Code committee's deliberations.

In addition to the survey, ease of use improvements have been made to the PCP process. Everyone has a role to play in farm animal welfare. By expanding opportunities for input, NFACC is giving everyone, from producer to consumer, the opportunity to play their part.

“The [top-of-mind] survey results were shared with all of the groups during their orientation to the Transport Code. These results helped illustrate for participants where concerns around current practices exist, and will help guide them as to where to focus their energy during the development of the Code.”  
Kate Cooper, Transport Code Manager

“The comments from the public comment period have been so interesting to review—in some cases they have really challenged the Code committee to re-evaluate our way of thinking. Anytime you are challenged in this way, the final outcome only gets better and stronger, and I'm pleased to be part of a process that is enriched in this way. Overall, the Code we create will provide a landmark moment in the continual development of the industry and will surely strengthen over time once put into practice.”  
Amanda Borchardt, aquatic veterinarian and producer representative





# Codes of Practice Under Development

## Farmed Salmonids

The creation of the first [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Salmonids](#) began with the [Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance](#) indicating its desire and commitment for a Code focused on the welfare of farmed salmonids (salmon, trout, charr). From there, [NFACC's Code development process](#) kicked into gear.

Public input on welfare issues was initially collected through a [top-of-mind survey](#). The survey attracted 706 respondents, just under half of whom provided specific input on their top-of-mind concerns for farmed fish. The top five welfare concerns expressed included:

- ◆ Stocking density
- ◆ Health monitoring and management
- ◆ Humane euthanasia and slaughter
- ◆ Water quality
- ◆ Humane handling



The Code committee reviewed and considered the top-of-mind welfare concerns in developing the Code. The committee also worked together to consider the numerous variables involved in raising farmed salmonids in Canada, from hatching to euthanasia.

A drafted Code was opened for public comment from November 2, 2020 to January 7, 2021. The [Scientific Committee research report](#), focusing on priority welfare issues, also was completed and, made publicly available when the draft Code was released for public comment. The Code committee is currently considering the feedback received and determining how it will impact the final version of the Farmed Salmonids Code. The new Code will be released in 2021.



“The challenge of finding the appropriate balance between scientific evidence versus moral and ethical considerations is difficult enough without throwing in the added layer of not being able to meet face-to-face with the other committee members. These weren't easy conversations to have virtually, but I feel the tensions showed how motivated we all were to develop a meaningful Code for aquaculture. With the guidance of Caroline, our Code Manager, we were able to create an environment where each member felt comfortable expressing their views for consideration.”

Wendy Vandersteen,  
Producer Representative

## Goat Code Development and Scientific Committees



“The Goat Code had not been updated since 2003. Since then, there has been a slow, but steady, advance in the scientific understanding of goat health and welfare. Familiarity with this knowledge was necessary to help ensure that the Code Development Committee was engaged in informed deliberations. Owing to our international Science Committee of acclaimed researchers' considerable efforts, the Code Development Committee was able to address many critical issues with contemporary scientific knowledge.”

Jeffrey Spooner, Goat Code Manager

## Goats

Revision of the [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Goats](#) began in late 2018, and public input was collected through a [top-of-mind survey](#) in 2019. A total of 363 responses were analyzed, and the top goat welfare concerns included:

- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Painful procedures
- ◆ Feed and water
- ◆ Transport
- ◆ Health and health management



During their first meeting, the Code committee and Scientific Committee agreed on the priority welfare issues that would be the focus of the Scientific Committee research report. The Code committee laboured to revise the Code by taking into account recent scientific research and industry progress since the creation of the original Code in 2003.

A drafted Code was opened for public comment from December 18, 2020 to February 22, 2021. The [Scientific Committee research report](#) was completed, peer-reviewed, and published when the public comment period was launched. The Code committee is currently considering the feedback received and how it will impact the Goat Code's final version. An updated Code will be released in 2021.



## Dairy Cattle

Revision of the [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle](#) began in early 2019 with public input collected through a [top-of-mind survey](#). A total of 1,257 responses were analyzed, and the top dairy cattle welfare concerns included:

- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Movement
- ◆ Painful and stressful practices
- ◆ Handling
- ◆ Lameness



The Code committee is considering the top-of-mind thoughts on dairy cattle welfare as they update the Code. In late 2020, a series of focus groups were completed with 50 producers across Canada to gain deeper insights on producer viewpoints on dairy cattle housing.

The Code committee has added sections to the drafted Code on caring for down cattle, assessing male calves' fitness for transport, dry off management, and weaning. The Scientific Committee research report, focusing on priority welfare issues, was recently completed, including peer review. The report will be publicly released when the draft Code is released for public comment. The Code committee is working hard to prepare the draft for public comment period.



## Transportation

Revision of the [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Livestock and Poultry: Transportation](#) began in late 2018, and public input was collected through a [top-of-mind survey](#) in 2019. A total of 416 responses were analyzed, and the top livestock transportation welfare concerns included:

- ◆ Stocking density during transport
- ◆ Handling
- ◆ Feed and water
- ◆ Transport times
- ◆ Weather conditions



The Code committee will consider the top-of-mind thoughts conveyed on animal welfare during transportation as this Code is updated. The Code committee is also reflecting on transport-related reports, including the [review of scientific research on priority welfare issues](#). The review focuses on research related to welfare issues impacting cattle, pigs, poultry, sheep, and equine transportation.

The Transportation Code is unique in that it applies to multiple livestock and poultry species, and covers transportation-related activities that occur both inside and outside vehicles. To facilitate the production of this complex Code, in addition to a Code Development Committee, nine working groups were created to contribute animal-specific or site-specific details, resulting in nearly 100 individuals participating in the Code process.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Poultry Catching and Transport Working Group</li> <li>◆ Pig Working Group</li> <li>◆ Cattle Working Group</li> <li>◆ Mink, Fox, and Rabbit Working Group</li> <li>◆ Hatchery Working Group</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Sheep and Goats Working Group</li> <li>◆ Bison and Cervid Working Group</li> <li>◆ Equine Working Group</li> <li>◆ Intermediary Sites Working Group</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

The Code Development Committee is working on completing the draft Code and making it available for public comment period in 2022. The new Code will be released in 2023.



“ I went into this process with an open mind, hoping that I would feel our work will have a positive impact and that I could be proud of the progress we are making. I have not been disappointed! ”

**Kelly Barratt,**  
Dairy Code veterinarian representative

### Transport Code Fitness Subcommittee



“ The only goal to keep in mind is improving the health and welfare of animals. And to get there, we must base ourselves on scientific results and understand how the updated code can be implemented so that producers can successfully work it. ”

**Yvan Bastien,**  
Dairy Code producer representative

### Transport Code Managers

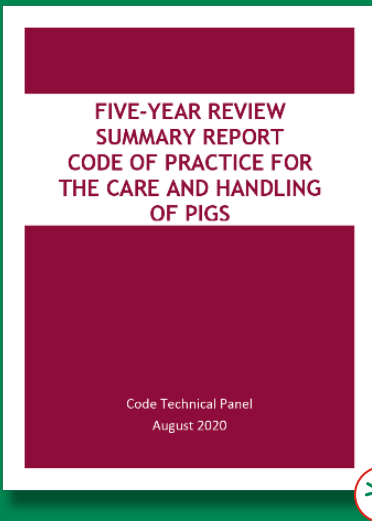


“ Our Scientific report really helped to set the stage for the poultry section. It showed also the lack of research done in Canada, with the impact that our researchers are now busier than ever. ”

**Lucie Verdon, Transport Code Manager**



## Pig Code 5-Year Review Report



## What you need to know about the Pig Code 5-Year Review Report



## Watch Out for the Launch of NFACC's New Podcast!



The new podcast will kick off with a three-part series on the Transportation Code that will elaborate on the realities of being a livestock and poultry transporter.

# Code of Practice Amendments

## Pigs

The [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs](#) was released in 2014. In 2019, a Code Technical Panel was formed to complete the Code's [five-year review](#). It was decided that the five-year Code review and the [Code amendment process](#) would be combined because an amendment was inevitable. The Panel knew that an amendment would be needed to address a housing requirement that stipulated that stakeholders would clarify options in 2019.



In August 2020, the [Five-Year Review Summary Report – Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pigs](#) was completed. The report offers an outline of the issues deliberated by the Panel. The report also identifies gaps in research and acknowledges the Canadian Pork Council's commitment to reporting on the industry's progress on implementing the Code. There was a total of eight recommendations made in the report, including five recommendations to amend the following Code sections:

- ◆ Section 1.1.2 – Gestating Gilts and Sows
- ◆ Section 1.1.6 – Boars
- ◆ Section 1.2.1 – Sow Space Allowance
- ◆ Section 3.4.1 – Recognizing Sickness Behaviour
- ◆ Section 4.2.0 – Stockmanship Skills Related to Animal Welfare

The proposed amendments were opened for public comment from September 21, 2020 to November 19, 2020. Deliberations are ongoing.

### As of July 1, 2024, mated gilts and sows must be housed:

- ◆ in groups; or
- ◆ in individual pens; or
- ◆ in stalls, if they are provided with the opportunity to turn around or exercise periodically, or other means that allow greater freedom of movement. Suitable options will be clarified by the participating stakeholders by July 1, 2019, as informed by scientific evidence.

## Farmed Mink

The [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Mink](#) was released in 2013. The Code's [five-year review](#) was completed in 2018, and it recommended that the Mink Code be amended in response to the following challenges.



A Code Amendment Committee was created in May 2020 and they considered approaches to addressing the identified challenges over several months.

The proposed amendments were made available for public comment from December 7, 2020 to February 4, 2021. The Code Amendment Committee is reflecting on the feedback collected through the public comment period, and the final Code will be released in the summer of 2021.

### Major challenges that warranted Code amendments:

- ◆ Pen sizes
- ◆ Access to nest boxes
- ◆ Proper mink catching and lifting methods
- ◆ Euthanasia methods

### Moderate challenges that warranted Code amendments:

- ◆ Identifying body condition extremes

**DID YOU KNOW?**

### PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE AMENDMENTS

The Codes undergoing amendments were each open for a 60-day Public Comment Period, resulting in over 1,000 submissions each.

PIG CODE –  
Public Comment  
Period Submissions

**1,122**

FARMED MINK CODE –  
Public Comment  
Period Submissions

**1,186**

# Aligning Codes with New Animal Transport Regulations

Canada's new Transport of Animals rules ([Part XII in the Health of Animals Regulations \(HAR\)](#)) came into effect on February 20th, 2020. Many of the on-farm Codes of Practice were developed before the updated regulations came into effect and were at risk of potentially misleading Code users by referencing an outdated regulatory framework. Therefore, NFACC assigned the Transportation Code Management Team to take on the task of reviewing the Transportation sections in on-farm Codes, and suggesting edits to text that no longer aligned with the updated regulations.

The Team focused on:

- ♦ identifying on-farm Code text that conflicted with the amended HAR,
- ♦ recommending changes that were limited to bringing transportation sections of on-farm Codes into alignment with the updated regulatory framework.

In so doing, the goal of respecting the priorities and decisions of the original Code Development Committees remained front and centre to ensure that only HAR and related references that were included in original Codes were considered for edits (e.g., new or supplemental text was not added unless required for context).

The process included engaging Humane Transport team members from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to help ensure that the suggested edits accurately reflected the updated HAR. Subsequently the proposed edits were presented to affected industry groups and/or their relevant committees, after which commodity groups accepted the suggested alignment edits. Finally, all alignment edits (that had been accepted by the Code commodity groups) were made available to NFACC's members for review in advance of being accepted at NFACC's December 2020 board meeting.

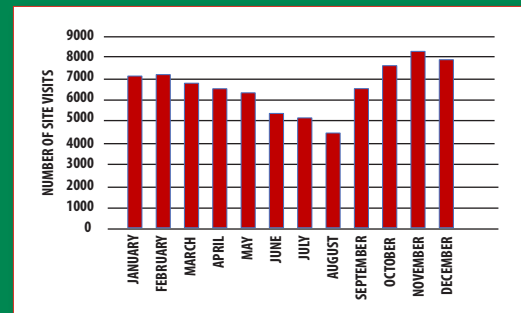
The edits are now in the process of being incorporated into the following on-farm Codes, and will soon be available from NFACC's website:

- ♦ beef cattle
- ♦ bison
- ♦ equine
- ♦ farmed fox
- ♦ farmed mink
- ♦ hatching eggs, breeders, chickens, and turkeys
- ♦ pigs
- ♦ pullets and laying hens
- ♦ rabbits
- ♦ sheep
- ♦ veal cattle

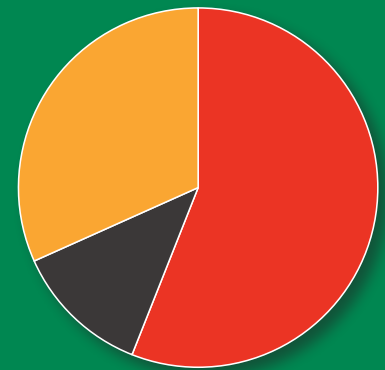
**“** When the Transport Code Management team met in November 2019 to collectively review each other's suggested edits, we quickly learned that the task was far more complex than we envisioned. So much so that we needed to develop guidelines to ensure that our approach was consistent across all 11 Codes, and that our efforts focussed exclusively on alignment with the new regulations. Our “rules” served us well, not only during our editing efforts, but also when edits were later reviewed by CFIA and producer stakeholder groups. Those rules really kept all of us on track. **”**

**Betsy Sharples, Transport Code Director**

## NFACC Website 2020 Traffic



## 79,733 Visits to the NFACC Website!



- Search Engines
- Referring Sites
- Direct Traffic

## Top 3 Referring Sites

1. Facebook
2. Canadian Food Inspection Agency
3. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

## Top 3 NFACC Webpages Visited

1. [Codes of Practice](#)
2. [NFACC Home](#)
3. [Poultry Code of Practice](#)





“NFACC’s multi-stakeholder approach to developing Codes for Finfish Welfare is an important step in our sector’s development and we are pleased to join other animal sectors to build Canada’s “best in the world” food production practices.”  
**Tim Kennedy, Executive Director**  
 Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance

## CACTUS CLUB CAFE

Cactus Club Cafe is a Canadian-owned, Vancouver-based restaurant group of premium casual restaurants, with 31 locations across Canada.



“We are proud to become an associate member of NFACC and will use this opportunity to continue implementing high standards of animal care and food safety on our farms.”  
**Caitlin Woolcott, Animal Welfare Specialist**



“By becoming a member of NFACC we are joining a strong partnership and will have even more opportunities to support the development and adoption of scientifically-informed practices to continuously improve animal health and welfare.”  
**Olivier Charbonneau, Director,**  
 Government, Regulatory & Industry Affairs

## NFACC's Video Library

### Whiteboard Videos

NFACC has created a series of whiteboard videos that detail how the Codes are developed and used. Check out NFACC's YouTube channel and share these short videos to raise awareness of NFACC and the Codes.

Raising the Bar



Key Features



How are Codes Used



Introduction to NFACC



### Current Research Presentations

In true 2020 fashion, two presentations were given at the first-ever virtual NFACC board meeting in June. These presentations were well received, and members advocated for the information to be shared broadly.



Working Toward Socially Sustainable Agriculture – what works and what doesn't

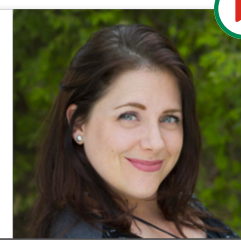
Marina (Nina) von Keyserlingk, Ph.D.  
 nina@mail.ubc.ca



**Nina's presentation outlines research on the unintended effect of legislation meant to address on-farm incursion and other activities, the impact of public education and engagement, and a path forward.**

Campaigns against agriculture: A risk factor for poor farmer mental health and poor animal welfare?

Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton  
 Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph



**Andria's presentation focuses on the impacts that campaigns against agriculture can have on farmers' mental health and, ultimately, animal welfare.**

### Learn More



This Report offers an overview of key progress of the “Advancing Animal Welfare and Public Trust Through Codes of Practice” project under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Comprehensive information on NFACC and its activities, including numerous resources and regular updates, is available at [www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca). The website features language selection for both English and French.