

BC SPCA comments on the introductory survey for
Code of Practice for the Transportation of Livestock and Poultry

March 20, 2019

GENERAL TOPICS (e.g., training, driving practices, equipment, on-road emergencies, cleanliness)

Driving and Other On-Road Practices (e.g., stoppages on-route, adjusting for environmental conditions)

1. Temperature and ventilation – set species/life stage appropriate minimum and maximum temperatures for animals not in climate-controlled transport. Temperature range must be 5-25°C in animal holding areas at all times of day/night.
2. Withdrawing food and water – set species/life stage appropriate maximum feed and water withdrawal time. Maximum time for each species must be 8 hours or less.
3. Implement mandatory driver and handler training, including emergency procedures.

Loading/Unloading (e.g., ramps, handling)

1. Prohibit handling methods that cause pain and distress (e.g. electric prods, yelling, hitting). Only species/life stage appropriate low stress handling permitted.
2. Low stress design of loading and handling facilities mandatory.
3. All personnel that are handling animals must be trained in species-specific low stress handling and animal behaviour.

Care of Animals at Transitional Sites (e.g., assembly points/yards, auctions/sales yards, feed/water rest stations)

1. Prioritize direct, local destinations and shorter routes to avoid the need to unload/reload and rest animals.
2. Animals must be rested after 8 hours without feed and water.
3. Animals must be rested for at least 24 hours with access to feed, water, and a comfortable resting area.

Vehicles and Equipment (includes containers)

1. Prescriptive, evidence-based loading densities for each species at various temperatures must be included in the Code.
2. Live monitoring and recording of conditions in onboard animal holding areas must be used. Action to maintain animal welfare is required as conditions change.
3. Vehicles and crates must be sanitized, roadworthy, and safe for animals before loading.

SPECIES-SPECIFIC TOPICS

Cattle (beef, dairy, and veal cattle)

1. Special provisions are required for cull cattle, calves, and lactating cattle.
2. Calves should have sufficient space on the truck for the group to lay down at the same time.
3. Transport should not occur directly before or after stressful procedures such as weaning, vaccinating, veterinary care, or handling for purposes other than transport.

Equines (horses, ponies, donkeys, mules)

1. Scope must include all equines, used for any purpose.
2. Equines must be housed singly or put in compatible groups, with mixing of groups avoided.
3. Equines hauled loose in a trailer must be allowed freedom of movement to choose a comfortable orientation and head position.

Pigs

1. Pigs must have sufficient space for the group to lie down at the same time.
2. Pig health, weather, driving technique, stress susceptibility, truck type and location in truck must be considered when determining fitness to ship for each animal.
3. Special provisions are required for cull, lactating and/or young animals.

Sheep/Goats

1. Sheep and goats must have sufficient space for the group to lie down at the same time.
2. Stocking density and/or ventilation must be adjusted to presence/absence of hair, fleece, and horns.
3. Sheep and goats must not be handled or lifted by grabbing their hair, fleece, or horns.

Bison/Deer

1. Bison must be kept in compatible groups when loading/unloading and during transport.
2. Appropriate stocking density is especially important for deer.
3. Deer must have sufficient space for the group to lay down at the same time.

Mink/Fox

1. Humane on-farm killing is preferred, preventing the need to transport live animals for pelting.
2. Mink and fox must not be transported in hot or humid weather.
3. There must be a solid divider that ensures no waste passes between cages while allowing appropriate ventilation.

Rabbits

1. Transport time begins when the first animal is placed into a crate and ends when the last is removed from a crate.
2. Cages must be secured so they cannot fall during loading or transport.
3. There must be a solid divider that ensures no waste passes between cages while allowing appropriate ventilation.

Poultry: Meat Birds (chickens, turkeys, breeders)

1. Birds must be held upright
2. Birds must be able to engage in natural sitting and standing positions while in crates.
3. Chicks must be provided with hydrating material and arrive at the final destination within 72 hours of hatching.

Poultry: Pullets and Laying Hens

1. Hens at end of lay and those with poor feather cover must be considered compromised.
2. Birds must be held upright.
3. Chicks must be provided with hydrating material during transport.

NFACC welcomes any additional comments or suggestions that should be considered in developing the Transportation Code. The BC SPCA further suggests:

- Farm animals are not accustomed to transport, so transport almost always results in poorer welfare than when an animal is not transported. Additionally, longer journeys tend to result in more welfare problems than shorter ones. For this reason, transportation must be avoided as much as possible. When transportation cannot be avoided, transport time and distance must be minimized. Pursuing on farm euthanasia for cull animals, regulated routine on-farm slaughter, and housing animals from birth to killing in the same location will help achieve this goal.
- Transportation impacts stress levels due to many factors. Handling, separation from familiar physical and social environments, loading, confinement, vibration, changes in temperature and humidity, inadequate ventilation, deprivation of food and water, unloading, vehicle movements, road conditions, and confinement all increase stress

levels of farm animals. Each factor must be mitigated in a species appropriate way for every animal that is transported. Those who transport animals must be educated on how these factors are interconnected and be able to adjust transport conditions accordingly.

- Transport injury and death must be monitored and recorded. Records must be reviewed by an independent governing body and available to the public.
- Appropriate mechanisms for communication between farmers, loaders, transporters and receivers exists that ensures tracking of transport welfare outcomes in order to monitor and improve performance.
- Cull animals must be selected well in advance and shipped while still in good condition. Unfit or compromised animals must be euthanized or slaughtered on farm.
- Special provisions are required for cull, young, and/or lactating animals.
- Reasons that animals balk, freeze, back away, run away, fall, or vocalize during handling must be investigated and remedied.
- All species must be transported in purpose-designed, species appropriate trucks/crates.
- For animals transported in crates: transport time begins when the first animal is placed into a crate and ends when the last is removed from a crate.
- Strategies for emergency response in the case of accidents must be established.
- Time without feed and water must be minimized, unless required for welfare (such as pigs) or food safety.
- Appropriate bedding must be provided for all species.
- Transport must not occur directly before or after stressful procedures such as weaning, vaccinating, veterinary care, or handling for purposes other than transport.
- We recommend referral to SPCA Certified standards for more information on humane handling and transportation. Standards can be downloaded at www.sPCA.bc.ca/spca-certified-standards.
- Every load and trip must be checked to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- More research is needed in many areas to continue to make progress on reducing transport stress.