

Canada Organic Standards

Assessing Improvements to Farm Animal Welfare: A Comparison of 2011 and 2015 Standards for Livestock Production

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- ✓ Farrowing (birthing) crates for housing/restraining pigs, prohibited
- ✓ Tie stalls and electric training devices for dairy cattle prohibited in new barn constructions and major renovations; must be phased out of existing barns over next 5 years
- ✓ Restrictions placed on types of painful procedures performed and methods used, with age limits and pain control requirements in place (must follow Codes of Practice)
- ✓ Minimum weaning ages for lambs (2 months or 18kg) and calves (3 months) and kits (30 days) set
- ✓ Natural behaviours, such as motivation to suckle (calves) or gnaw (rabbits), now accommodated
- ✓ Skip-a-day feeding programs for poultry prohibited; poultry must be fed at least once daily
- ✓ Annual water quality testing required to ensure safe, clean drinking water for farm animals
- ✓ Aerial ammonia levels must be monitored and maintained below set thresholds
- ✓ Maximum stocking densities now accommodate a larger variety of animals and living conditions (e.g. large beef cattle, dairy cattle, rabbits housed outdoors, young laying hens and poultry housed in aviaries or mobile outdoor shelters)
- ✓ Sick or weak dairy cattle must be milked with portable milking units
- ✓ Ease of access to pasture/range for poultry improved by prescribing minimum numbers, sizes and dispersion of barn exit holes (popholes)
- ✓ Natural lighting required for indoor-housed poultry; lighting requirements set for rabbits
- ✓ Pregnant does (rabbits) must be given secluded individual burrows or nest boxes for birthing
- ✓ Animals' fitness for transport must be assessed prior to loading; sick or unfit animals to be withheld from transport
- ✓ Farmers must document when animal welfare issues arise and develop corrective action plans

CAN/CGSB-32.310-2006 (August 2011)	CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015 (December 2015)
	General
Corrective action plans not required	6.1.6 As a general principle, the operator shall demonstrate their commitment to animal welfare. When an animal welfare issue is identified, the operator shall develop a corrective action plan. The operator shall document demonstrated improvements in animal welfare practices and shall make available upon request any documents or assessments mandated by industry associations.
	Livestock Feed
No specifics	6.4.3 b) in dairy operations, calves, lambs and kids may be taken from their mothers at the age of 24 h, provided that they receive colostrum. If contagious diseases are present in the herd, removal can occur sooner provided that calves, lambs and kids receive colostrum; c) calves shall be given fresh, whole, organic milk or reconstituted organic milk, until the age of three months; d) lambs and kids shall be given fresh, whole, organic milk or reconstituted organic milk, until the age of two months or a weight of 18 kg; e) if they are not nursing, young animals shall be fed to meet their nutritional requirements and to achieve optimal growth and health, using artificial teats to satisfy their motivation to suck; f) dairy calves shall have access to solid food at all times; NOTE Refer to the <i>Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle</i> for recommendations on colostrum feeding and the quantity of milk to be fed to dairy calves. k) poultry shall be fed daily. A “skip-a-day” feeding regime for breeding birds is prohibited.

	<p>l) rabbits shall be given forage, such as grass and hay, and have access to material that keeps teeth healthy, such as gnawing blocks, root vegetables and tree branches. Substances in gnawing blocks shall be listed in Table 5.2 of CAN/CGSB-32.311.</p>
Water testing not required	<p>6.4.5 Livestock of all ages shall be given clean, fresh water on demand. The main water source shall be tested initially for potential livestock toxins, for example, heavy metals, ions and bacteria, according to livestock drinking water quality guidelines. Thereafter, the water source shall be tested annually for bacterial contamination. If colony forming unit (CFU) levels are higher than 100/100 mL, remedial action shall be taken.</p>
Transport and Handling	
6.6.5 The duration of transportation shall be as short as possible. [end]	<p>6.5.5 The duration of transportation shall be as short as possible. If animals are in transit for more than 5 h, recommendations regarding maximum transit times and minimum feed and water requirements, and rest times, as provided in the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation, shall apply. If these recommendations are not followed, justification shall be provided.</p>
Assessing fitness for transport not required	<p>6.5.6 Fitness for transport shall be assessed before loading. Sick or unfit animals shall not be transported, for example, those that are injured, lame, emaciated, in late gestation or heavily lactating.</p>
Livestock Health Care	
No reference to the Codes of Practice; Spaying not mentioned	<p>6.6.4 c) 3) for castration, tail docking, dehorning and branding, operators shall consult the applicable Code of Practice and follow the requirements for age restrictions and methods and the use of pain control medications; 7) spaying of female beef cattle is prohibited.</p>
Livestock Living Conditions	
6.8.1 f) no specifics on ammonia thresholds; birthing areas not discussed	<p>6.7.1 The operator shall establish and maintain animal living conditions that accommodate the health and natural behaviour of animals, including: f) good air quality. Humidity, dust particles and ammonia levels shall not impair the well-being of animals. Ammonia levels shall not exceed 25 ppm. If levels exceed 25 ppm, remedial action shall be taken; i) animals that give birth indoors shall be provided with sufficient space and a clean, dry, well-bedded space with stable footing. Birthing facilities must allow for separation from other animals and all the mother's needs shall be accommodated, including milking and nursing, until the mother is recovered from the birthing process. Animals shall not be tied or tethered when giving birth;</p>
Additional Requirements for Cattle, Sheep and Goats	
6.8.7 b)	<p>6.11.1 b) space allowances were further defined to accommodate larger cattle</p>
6.8.8	<p>6.11.2 space allowances were further defined in Table 1 to accommodate dairy cows</p>
6.8.3 Tie stalls permitted in all dairy cattle facilities	<p>6.12.1.1 Tie stalls [for dairy cattle] are prohibited in new constructions and major renovations.</p>
Not specific	<p>6.12.1.2 In a free-stall system, the ratio of cows to stalls shall not exceed 1:1.</p>
No specifics on electric trainer use; no restrictions on the tying of cow' tails	<p>6.12.1.3 Electric trainers are allowed on existing tie-stall operations and prohibited in new constructions or major barn renovations. All use of electric trainers shall be discontinued within five years from the date of publication. a) When electric trainers are used, the applicable requirements and recommendations of the Code of Practice for the care and handling of dairy cattle shall be followed. In addition, the following restrictions apply: 1) Electric cow trainers shall only be continually activated for the first week that cows are spending nights in the barn, and thereafter shall only be switched on for a maximum of two days per week to reinforce the initial training; 2) Electric trainers shall be located above a contact safety bar to alert the cow that she is getting close to the trainer. b) The tails of cows in stalls may be tied to prevent the tail from lying in the gutter, provided that the tying allows for natural behaviour, free movement of the tail and quick release when necessary.</p>
No specifics	<p>6.12.1.4 If milking parlours are in use: a) operators shall minimize animal waiting time between the time they are moved to the holding area and the time they return to the barn or pasture; b) portable milking units shall be available for sick or weak animals that are unable to make it to the milking parlour;</p>

	<p>c) electric crowd gates are prohibited;</p> <p>d) non-slip flooring shall be used in the holding area, parlour and alleys.</p>
Additional Requirements for Poultry	
6.8.11.1 e) duration/age limits not prescribed for poultry	<p>6.13.1 f) The laying flock shall have outdoor access for a minimum one-third of its laying life.</p> <p>h) Barn-raised meat chickens shall have outdoor access on a daily basis by 25 days of age. Meat chickens raised outdoors in shelters without indoor access shall have access to pasture on a daily basis by 4 weeks of age, unless weather conditions endanger the health or safety of the birds. Turkeys shall have outdoors access by 8 weeks of age.</p>
6.8.11.5 distribution and measurements for popholes not previously prescribed	<p>6.13.5.1 Exits (i.e. popholes) shall:</p> <p>a) allow passage for more than one bird at a time, and be evenly distributed along the line of access to the outdoor range;</p> <p>b) shall correspond to the requirements shown in Table 3 for the number and size of exits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layers: 2m/1000 hens – min. 50 cm wide & 35 cm high – min. 2 popholes regardless of flock size • Broilers: 1m/1000 birds OR all birds within 15m of an exit – min. 50 cm wide & 35 cm high – min. 2 popholes regardless of flock size • Turkeys: 2m/1000 birds – min. 150 cm wide & 75 cm high – min. 2 popholes regardless of flock size <p>6.13.5.2 When existing organic poultry barns do not meet the requirements of 6.13.5.1 b), either the distance from an exit from anywhere in the barn shall be no more than 15 m (49 ft), or the operator shall provide evidence that birds utilize outdoor range. Evidence shall demonstrate that 25-50 % of birds are on range when there are no age or weather constraints.</p> <p>6.13.13 extension may be granted for up to 3 years if major renovations are required to comply</p>
6.8.11.8 window area/light permeable fabric not previously prescribed	<p>6.13.8 Poultry housed indoors shall be provided with natural light either with evenly distributed windows or light permeable fabric. The total window area shall be no less than 1% of the total ground-floor area, unless it can be demonstrated that natural light levels are sufficient to read a document such as a newspaper anywhere in the barn.</p> <p>6.13.13 extension may be granted for up to 3 years if major renovations are required to comply</p>
6.8.11.9 no stocking densities prescribed for pullets	6.13.9 Indoor and outdoor space allowances for pullets added to the table of maximum stocking densities permitted for poultry
6.8.11.9/10 no mention of aviaries	6.13.10 Multi-level aviary systems for layers shall have no more than three levels or tiers above ground level. Total floor space, for calculation of solid-floor area and bird density requirements, shall include all usable floor levels (see 6.13.6 and 6.13.9). If winter gardens are used to provide required scratching areas, they shall be accessible year-round.
6.8.11.10 no reference for mobile shelters	6.13.11 When birds are in moveable field shelters, the shelters shall be moved daily, whenever possible, and at least once every four days, taking into consideration the impact on the birds and on the land. Density within the moveable shelters shall correspond to the indoor densities described in 6.13.9.
Additional Requirements for Rabbits	
6.8.12 no mention of mobile pens	6.14.2 The use of mobile pasture pens [for rabbits] is permitted, provided that pens do not restrict natural behaviour and they are moved at least once every three days.
6.8.12.2 space allowances prescribed for indoor space and outdoor runs/pens only	6.14.3 Rabbits shall have space to run, hop and dig, and to sit upright on their back legs with ears erect. The space allowance table now limits stocking density of rabbits in outdoor pasture and mobile pens. Previously, only space allowances for indoor areas and outdoor runs (pens) had been prescribed.
No specifics	6.14.4 Rabbits shall not be subjected to continuous lighting or kept in permanent darkness. During the day, rabbits shall be able to clearly see each other and their surroundings.
No specifics	6.14.5 Does about to give birth shall be given secluded individual burrows or nest boxes for kindling (birthing).
No specifics	6.14.6 The doe and litter shall have free access to outdoor range and foraging areas once the kits reach 21 days of age.
No specifics	6.14.7 Weaning before the kits are 30 days of age is prohibited. However, if the welfare of the doe or kits is compromised, earlier weaning is permitted.

Additional Requirements for Pigs and Farm-Raised Wild Boar	
6.8.13.3 No mention; permitted by omission	6.15.3 d) the use of farrowing crates as a means of restraint is prohibited.

Canadian General Standards Board Committee on Organic Agriculture (CAN/CGSB-32.310-2015)

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Additional resources

- Copies of the Canadian Organic Standards available at:
<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/ongc-cgsb/programme-program/normes-standards/comm/32-20-agriculture-eng.html>
- More information on organic certification at:
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/organic-products/labelling-and-general-information/certified-choice/eng/1328082717777/1328082783032>
- Information on BC SPCA farm animal welfare initiatives and the SPCA Certified farm certification program at:
www.sPCA.bc.ca/farm
- Compare SPCA Certified standards for animal welfare to organic standards:
<http://www.sPCA.bc.ca/animal-issues/farm-animal-welfare/sPCA-certified/sPCA-certified-standards.html>