

## Animal Husbandry and Welfare: Part 3 of 4

October 2012

### ☀ **Humbling**

At time of writing, the Canadian beef industry and Canada's Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are embroiled in the largest beef recall in Canadian history, involving export trade as well. An Alberta-based beef processing plant has been closed and [more than 1500 beef products](#) distributed across Canada and the United States have been recalled due to E.coli O157:H7 contamination. An emergency parliamentary debate lingered into the late hours of the night, peppered with heightened emotion and the typical finger-pointing, as one MP laid the blame on beef processors, not beef producers. Yet, at a distance, there is no 'we-they' dynamic. Operators at every juncture of Canada's beef sector are gripped by this tragedy, searching for answers, fine-tooth combing their own procedures, awaiting and fearing the commercial consequences.

### ☀ **Integrity**

...in the end, is what is being tested. The First North American Strategy Conference on Animal Agriculture (the operative words are "First" and "North American" as the event was held in Canada for the first time) of US-based [The Center for Food Integrity](#), illustrates both the long-term (no quick fix) and global (no country is immune) relevance of their mandate:

- addressing the abundant and complicated factors related to sustainable animal agriculture
- defining "sustainable animal agriculture" in an effort to build consumer trust and confidence

While the beef processor, XL Foods, and the CFIA address this situation, Canadian beef producers continue to bring beef cattle to market, compliant with the best standards yet open to improvement.

### ☀ **Producer Initiatives**

Several jurisdictions, worldwide, are implementing regulatory standards over the care and handling of farm animals at an increasing pace. However, a lesser known and less visible fact is the proactive stance taken by producers themselves, such as applied research, training, and sector self-regulation.

### ☀ **Help Lines**

[Farm and Food Care Ontario](#) "provides a confidential way for people to report situations of farm animals that they feel require better care or for farmers themselves to call if they need some help" via the [Animal Care Helpline Service](#).

### ☀ **Research, Partnerships, Collaboration**

In 2011, the University of Guelph's [Campbell Centre for the Study of Animal Welfare](#) hosted the "5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on the Assessment of Animal Welfare at Farm and Group Level". The Campbell Centre provides evidence-based advice such as: "decision-making during transport, sale and slaughter", "how to content a cow" and "humaneness of rodent control" (cottagers take heed).

### ☀ **Training and Codes of Practice**

Each type of farm animal presents particular physical needs. Inspection, training, and best-practice programs have shown to address problems and elevate standards of care. Trainees may be generational farmers learning the benefits of recent research, or, newcomers to a type of animal rearing.

### ☀ **Transportation**

Livestock hauling is one of the rare occasions when urban-based consumers see live farm animals. Unseen are the challenges: ensuring the animals are healthy and calm, the trucks clean, the stalls equipped with adequate bedding and ventilation, the driver having the skill set to transport live cargo. Previously, this function was performed by men with a farming history and farm animal know-how. As reported by Deanna Roselen (Food in Canada), today few candidates present with this background and experience. Hence, the Ontario Trucking Association has [launched a campaign](#) to increase qualified drivers, provide training, raise industry standards, and solicit supply chain buy-in. **FF**

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