

## Animal Husbandry and Welfare: Part 4 of 4

December 2012

### ☀ Ghandi Quote

**“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”**

Events which took place at a Manitoba hog farm in late 2012, and the subsequent response from several authorities, including animal care experts, indicates that Canada - globally regarded as a peaceful, upright and fair nation - would score badly.

### ☀ An Undercover View of a Hog Farm in Canada

In early December, an undercover [video](#) of treatment of pigs on a hog farm in Manitoba, produced by the animal rights organization [Mercy for Animals](#) was forwarded to various stakeholders, including the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency \(CFIA\)](#) (federal legislative body responsible for, among other aspects of meat procurement, humane treatment of animals raised for food) and a national televised investigative news program, CTV's [W5](#).

### ☀ Few Looked the Other Way..

Several organizations with an interest in hog farming, having viewed the footage, quickly issued public statements. The [first press release](#) – CFIA (December 6) – indicates that federal authorities were made aware of the video prior to the W5 public broadcast (December 8). The CFIA statement, which remains online at time of writing (late December), condemns the practices, asserts the Agency's commitment to humane animal treatment, and vows to have the issues addressed by the appropriate jurisdiction, the Province of Manitoba. The Canada Pork Council [press release of December 8](#) rebuked the content, discounted economics as an excuse, and made a resolve for remedial action: “The level of disrespect toward the animals shown in parts of the video footage is unacceptable to Canada's hog farmers. This does not portray the values of most farmers. [“Dr. Rick Holley](#), an oft-quoted food safety expert from the University of Manitoba, consulted by CTV regarding the video, raised the matter of maggots on the hog farm, and upheld concerns about animal health, and, both animal and food safety, as reasonable and rationale.

### ☀ ..Some Did

A [shoot the messenger](#) article posted December 10. A sixth generation farmer incensed by the W5 coverage, in that it failed to portray [Canadians' lulled sense of food security](#), and demand for cheap food.

### ☀ Disconnect Somewhere

[The Center for Food Integrity](#) assembled a panel of animal care experts to address the allegations of animal abuse and cruelty put forth in the video and issue a [report](#). [A comprehensive report has not been located online].

“The panel that examined the recent video in Manitoba was comprised of Dr. Laurie Connor, University of Manitoba; Dr. Jennifer Brown, Prairie Swine Centre; and Dr. Robert Friendship, Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph.” Overall, the panel accepts most of the videoed practices as standard procedure, seemingly shrugging their shoulders at what they deem to be issues that the hog farming industry is currently grappling with “gestation housing, euthanasia, and pain control with regard to procedures like castration”, adding that sensationalizing them doesn't help us arrive at a solution.” On the other hand, the panel did identify and condemn outright abuse in the video, such as pulling a pig by its ears, slapping a pig, and a sow trapped between the rails of a stall.

### ☀ Definite Economic Factor

The practice of [crating](#) pregnant sows is under review by major retailers such [Sobey's](#), and pork there from to be eliminated by restaurant chains such as [Wendy's](#) and Burger King. The [Canadian Coalition of Farm Animals](#) announced these and other pledges, such as eliminating eggs collected from caged hens. No doubt, the cost-price relationship will be affected, and the consumer must be willing to pay their fair share. Lastly, UK-based The Ethical Investor has undertaken a [Benchmark on Animal Welfare](#) to assess the progress of publicly-traded stakeholders on this matter. **FF**