

THE CHICKEN FARMER

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THE CHICKEN FARMER

Animal Care on the Agenda

Public and farmer attitudes about animal care have evolved significantly over the past 25 years. Changes in these attitudes, as well as industry developments and enhancements, have resulted in ongoing and progressive developments in farm animal care practices.

Our studies show that, among consumers, animal rights issues concerning chickens have increased significantly over the last ten years, overtaking the prominence of issues regarding cows. At the same time, Canadians have lost touch with farming and food production issues. With most of us living in towns and cities today, people often don't realize how agriculture has changed, or even what route food follows on its way to the grocery store.

As a result, growing numbers of people have inaccurate notions of farming and food production. Whether these notions are nostalgic and romantic or negative and disconcerting, the realities of farming sometimes come as a real surprise.

Our mission is to dispel these myths and work with our industry partners to ensure that our commitments to high standards in the care and handling of chickens are met and followed. After all, it is in the best interest of all industry players to see that birds are raised in the most careful and conscientious manner.

Over the next few issues we will be featuring some of our industry partners who participated in the creation of the codes we follow.

CFC Animal Care Committee

In March 2003, CFC established a committee to examine the development of an auditable animal care program based on the revised *Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals: Chickens, Turkeys and Breeders from Hatchery to Processing Plant*. The goal was to develop a comprehensive program designed to demonstrate the appropriate care given to Canadian chickens.

These nationally developed guidelines set out recommended standards for the care and handling of farm animals, based on current scientific knowledge and farming experience. The Code of Practice should not be considered complete or perfect and future updates to the Code may be needed in order to reflect new economic, technical, and practical considerations.



CFC's Animal Care Program is designed to be auditable and is based on the Code of Practice. In July 2004, the Animal Care Committee presented a draft program to the Board of Directors and was directed to conduct pilot projects of the draft program in all provinces to test its practicality and ease of implementation. The pilot projects began in January 2005. The program is currently being reviewed by industry partners and has received some positive initial feedback.

As an audited on-farm program, CFC anticipates that third party inspections will make the program more transparent.

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies


A key industry partner in the review of the Code of Practice is the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS), a national charitable organization that serves as animal advocates rather than activists. The CFHS works from within to help improve the standards and regulations that govern the care and handling of animals.



As an advocate, the CFHS is willing to work alongside the industry to research and improve the living conditions under which animals are raised, handled and transported. Animal rights activists lean towards a more rigid, less cooperative approach.

With over 100 member societies and branches, representing some 400,000 individuals and with a mandate "to promote compassion and humane treatment for all animals," the CFHS participates on livestock committees and within varied animal care initiatives across Canada to provide a voice for animal welfare. They indeed see the big picture, that the Canadian culture involves the consumption of meat and are willing to work with our industries to adopt systems that offer improved animal welfare.

CFHS accepts only those practices which provide high levels of care for the animals, protect them from suffering at all stages of their lives, respect the welfare of individual

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animals and provide for the animals' physical and psychological well-being and behavioural needs.

Shelagh MacDonald, program director for CFHS, believes that there will always be a role to play for animal welfare advocates in the process of setting, evaluating and improving animal care guidelines. "We want to be involved in the humane treatment of animals," she said. "It is definitely more valuable to be at the table on many of these initiatives than to criticize from afar."

"We are participating in an attempt to guide and improve the industries," said MacDonald. "The Codes of Practice have played a role in establishing minimum standards for husbandry and we are pleased that recently there has been a clear move on the part of the farming industry to adopt auditable animal welfare standards in Canada."

MacDonald believes that CFC has been moving in the right direction with the implementation of an animal care program and is currently reviewing the draft program.

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies strives to:

1. prevent cruelty and suffering to animals recognizing that all animals have intrinsic value, remarkable complexity, inherent dignity and are subjects of moral concern;
2. proceed from the principle that no one has the right to cause physical or mental pain or suffering to any animal;
3. work within the law and in cooperation with government, research and industry representatives; and
4. educate the general public, and improve conditions for animals while maintaining a balanced sensitivity towards both animal and human needs. 

Stakes are High at the WTO Negotiations

Once again, the month of July was very busy in terms of agriculture negotiations and other WTO events. The summer break seemed, once again, to be an informal deadline for mid-year results. Negotiators expected to achieve a lot. Or so they hoped.

Why? Because the stakes are getting higher. There is a firm deadline in place to achieve an agreement on full modalities at the next WTO Ministerial Conference in December in Hong Kong. These talks in Geneva were supposed to produce a first draft (called "first approximation") for these modalities by the end of the month. It did not happen.

After a very intense 6-month period, with countless meetings at all possible levels – technical experts, chief negotiators, ministers, prime ministers and even a G8 summit meeting – the negotiations could not advance as much as many had hoped.

At the end of June, Tim Groser, the Chair of agriculture negotiations, issued a preliminary status report that pointed out the major problem areas that need solving in order to move forward. It was clear that the level of ambition was going to be lowered: the "draft modalities" became "first approximation", which then became "refined assessment" and finally just a "report".

The major reason why so little progress was made this summer is that the market access pillar in these agriculture negotiations is the most complex and difficult one. Countries simply need more time to find an agreement in this area. In addition, many other smaller factors contributed to the slowdown.

- First, the U.S. postponed making any move on WTO negotiations before the Congress voted on the much-debated CAFTA Agreement – a free trade agreement with several Central American countries. While some saw the benefits of free trade, others pointed to thousands of job losses. It was only at the end of the month, the night of Wednesday, July 27, that the

Congress finally passed this agreement with a very narrow margin of 2 votes.

- Second, because the U.S. was not making any move, the EU wasn't either. As simple as that.
- Third, it became clear that Tim Groser would no longer be the Chair of agriculture negotiations. Due to his decision to run for the opposition party in New Zealand's parliamentary elections, his government replaced him as ambassador to the WTO and would no longer support him as Chair of agriculture negotiations after July. The need for a new chairman in September diverted some focus from the negotiations. The new New Zealand ambassador to the WTO, Crawford Falconer, will replace Groser.
- Fourth, the trade organization itself renewed its leadership. As of September, Pascal Lamy, the former EU trade commissioner, becomes the new WTO Director General. With a very active and energetic nature, many await for his involvement to push this round of negotiations forward. The December deadline does not leave him much time.

Moving Forward

Of note this summer was the Dalian (China) mini-ministerial meeting at the beginning of July, when ministers agreed to use a G20 – a group of export-oriented developing countries – proposal on market access as a starting point for further negotiations. That proposal defined a tariff reduction formula with 5 tiers and proposed linear cuts for each tier (same percentage cut to apply to all tariffs within a given tier). It also proposed a tariff cap at the level of 100% for products subject to the general tariff reduction formula, but said little about the treatment of sensitive products.

Shortly after, the European Union suggested another idea of a reduction formula having 3 tiers and average cuts, with a minimum and a maximum, for each tier. The major EU objective was to see flexibility both in the reduction formula and with respect to the treatment of sensitive products, something which most countries opposed:



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flexibilities are supposed to be negotiated only for sensitive products.


Both suggestions were rejected by Canada's poultry, dairy and egg farmers as both raised numerous concerns with respect to the general tariff reduction formula and the selection and treatment of sensitive products.

If July did not manage to produce much in these agriculture negotiations, it is possible that the same can be expected this autumn.

It was repeatedly made clear that the December Hong Kong Ministerial Conference remains a firm deadline for agreeing on a full modalities document and, after the summer break, negotiations are definitely going to pick up speed. Countries have already issued their positions, so everyone knows

where the others stand. It is now only a matter of finding the common ground that can be accepted by all, and a first mini-ministerial meeting has already been planned for mid-October, with a second that might take place in mid-November.

CFC representatives were in Geneva at the end of July and, if necessary, will be there again this autumn, keeping in close contact with the Canadian negotiators, trying to influence a favourable modalities agreement and continuing to promote the interests of the Canadian chicken farmers. When negotiators get stuck, it is politicians' role to unlock the trade talks.

At that moment, we must all be ready to convey to our federal and provincial politicians this simple message: unlike other countries, we have no flexibility and no room to manoeuvre. Once again, no deal is better than a bad deal. 

Canada Day and Chicken — A Recipe for Success!

For the 13th consecutive year as national sponsor of Canada Day festivities in Ottawa, Chicken Farmers of Canada once again served nearly 10,000 chicken sandwiches at *The Great Canadian Chicken Barbecue*. As in previous years, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada received 50 cents from the sale of each chicken sandwich or Caesar salad, making the event a success on many levels.

After a rollercoaster year on the Hill, CFC also had the chance to pull out the seats, push up the umbrellas and play host to some of our government and industry colleagues and stakeholders. The chance to sit in the shadow of the Peace Tower, enjoy the food and celebrate in good company, has become a "must do" on many Canada Day agendas across the city.

One busy schedule in particular was that of Tina Lissemore, of Port Williams, Nova Scotia. Her winning sandwich, "The Taste of Summer Chicken Sandwich", won Tina and her family a trip to Ottawa for Canada Day in a nation-wide contest held in *Canadian Living* and *Coup de Pouce* magazines. The family enjoyed a day full of the events, sights and sounds that make celebrating July 1st in Ottawa a special experience.

As in previous years, CFC also had the chance to pair up with the Centurion Conference and Event Center.

Throughout the day crowds enjoyed the culinary skills of Chef Fouad El Jadayel, as he tempted audiences with the aroma of Mediterranean Shish Kebabs and Grilled Tuscan Chicken Breast.

For those who couldn't join us that day, and for those who would like to re-create the taste, the recipes used on Canada Day will be made available in the recipes section of the Chicken Farmers of Canada website at www.chicken.ca.

Official Canada Day Charity

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is one of this country's leading national, youth-serving organizations dedicated to providing high-quality services that promote the healthy growth and development of young Canadians and their families.

The Boys and Girls Clubs serve more than 150,000 children and youth in communities nationwide. Some three million young Canadians are club alumni.

The 700 clubs, some over a hundred years old, are in large city centres, remote rural communities and on First Nations Reserves.

We are proud to be affiliated with such a distinguished and necessary organization.

See you next year! 





The Importance of Biosecurity in Avian Influenza Prevention

In early 2004, Canada suffered its worst outbreak of avian influenza ever. The highly pathogenic H7N3 virus swept through three clusters of egg and poultry operations in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. Over 13 million chickens, turkeys and other poultry were depopulated to contain the disease.

The economic and emotional toll left many wondering what caused the outbreak and what caused it to spread.

Dr. Christine Power of the Animal Disease Surveillance Unit of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency issued an interim report in February 2005. She pulled together the expertise of several specialists throughout North America, many of whom were on the front lines of the Fraser Valley outbreak.

The report is preliminary and government officials continue their investigations. A clearer understanding of the outbreak is expected at the end of 2005 or early in 2006. The full interim report is available on the CFIA web site at: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/diseases/avflu/2004rep/epie.shtml.

It is essential to note that the cause of the initial infection on a broiler breeder farm — known as the index farm — has not been determined. Likewise, the causes of the spread of the disease from one farm to the other have not been definitively determined though biosecurity and airborne transmission of the virus are thought to be the two most likely causes. The interim report is a good first step in determining what happened, why and for preventing another Fraser Valley-type incident in Canada.

The following highlights are provided to assist egg and poultry producers, and all who work with them, to review key production practices and avoid another outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

The origins

An examination of the genes of the virus that got onto the index farm points to two potential sources: domestic poultry from Eastern North America and waterfowl from the Southern United States. In addition, the possibility that surface water contaminated by wild birds drained downward from a field into the index farm's well has not been ruled out. Government officials hope to have a better picture of the origins of the virus in the fall of 2005.

It is also possible that the low pathogenic form of the virus was introduced to the index farm by the re-using of hatchery egg racks and flats or by transferring roosters from one premise to another. These are only possibilities, however, and it is important to emphasize that investigations revealed hatcheries were not implicated in the spread of the virus after it became highly pathogenic.

Feed practices were also reviewed. Fecal contamination of grains is not likely to cause a multi-farm outbreak. Broiler breeder rations, however, are prepared as a mash that is not heat-treated. Therefore, it is possible that the virus can be introduced into those rations.

The bottom line is that the importance of protecting your flocks from both wild sources of disease as well as cross-contamination from other farms cannot be underestimated.

The spread of the disease

Information gathered from managers of the first five farms infected ruled out that a common service provider spread the disease.

However, it is quite possible that many different people actually contributed to the spread. A gram of infected feces can contain as many as ten billion virus particles, making it very easy to spread contaminated manure from one farm to another through the movement of people, equipment and vehicles. In addition, a small amount of contaminated dust on boots or clothing can transmit the virus from an infected barn to another premise.

An assessment of both surface water and ground water indicated only a low risk that the highly pathogenic virus spread from one farm to another by water. Officials reviewed drainage maps and tested water from ditches and sloughs. In addition, three of the first five infected farms were served by the municipal water system.

The CFIA report questions the backhauling of feed. If feed stored on-farm were contaminated and returned to the mill when the production cycle was over for recycling, it could contaminate other farms. In the case of the Fraser Valley outbreak, there was no association between any particular feed company and the way the disease spread among the first five farms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Canadian egg and poultry industries' on-farm food safety programs recognize the importance of meticulous biosecurity in keeping disease away from flocks.¹ Although these programs have been developed to promote safe food, the criteria found in them are also those required to protect animal health.

You must consider several different ways the virus could get onto your farm including rodents, wild birds, insects and other pests, people, their clothing, equipment and vehicles. Correct deficiencies right away. Also, screen visitors and employees, monitor feed production and delivery and ensure proper clean-out and disinfection with downtime between flocks.



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The CFIA report recommends that the risk of well beds becoming contaminated with water seeping from fields should be reviewed and the installation of barn water purifiers assessed. On feed practices, the report recommends reviewing backhauling as well as doing a risk assessment on the potential for grain crops to become contaminated in the field.

Airborne Dispersion

A review of existing research in B.C. as well as an assessment of wind during the actual outbreak has revealed that airborne dispersion could have played a role.

A pre-outbreak study by the Sustainable Poultry Farming Group revealed that roughly 40% of dust near a poultry barn fan was invisible and could remain suspended in air for several days. CFIA, together with the Department of National Defence and Health Canada, collected over 240 air samples during the outbreak. One taken about 800 metres from an infected barn had very low levels of the avian influenza virus. It is not known if the virus was alive or dead.

The necessary operation of fans to ventilate birds and disposal crews over the many days and nights of the depopulation probably dispersed the virus into the air. The report also notes that the culling methods used on the first two infected premises had the potential to put the virus into the wind. CFIA examined meteorological data against the timing of infections and concluded that depopulation of the index farm resulted in a moderate risk for the virus to be carried by the wind to the second farm and a low risk for the fourth and fifth operations. In addition, there was a low risk of spread from the second premise to the fourth and fifth operations.

It will probably take several years to know for sure the degree to which airborne transmission is responsible for spreading avian influenza. Ultraviolet radiation, humidity and pollutants decrease the virus' survival rate while salinity found in coastal areas such as the Fraser Valley may protect it. Barns within 500 metres of each other are at higher risk for airborne transmission. In areas of high density, airborne transmission should be anticipated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the case of a flock known to be infected with highly pathogenic avian influenza, or any H7 or H5 subtype, disposal must be under the authority of CFIA. Depopulation of infected flocks should occur as quickly as possible to avoid multiplication of the virus and should occur within barns to reduce windborne dispersion. Barn doors should be kept closed as much as possible during disposal. In

addition, the CFIA's protocol now is to avoid moving carcasses off-farm and wherever possible to compost within the barns to reduce chances of disease spreading into the environment.

The closer you are to other poultry facilities, the more vigilant you need to be in your biosecurity. If you are planning new facilities, you need to consider proximity to other facilities and ways to reduce risks associated with proximity.

Given the current knowledge of livestock density and wind patterns in the Fraser Valley, the installation of barn inlet filters in the event of a second outbreak may be prudent. In addition, the report suggests the research and development of an air cleaning system that would disinfect or remove infected material from exhausted air of infected barns.

Other findings

The report critically assesses other activities by CFIA that were brought into question during the outbreak. Dispatch records were studied to review inspectors' movements and no association could be found between on-farm activities of CFIA and increased spread of the disease.

Leakage from trailers hauling carcasses did occur. While the way this affected the disease spread is not known, the report recognizes the need for CFIA to identify materials

and methods which would eliminate the chances of this happening again. The preferred protocol of on-farm composting where possible will address this problem in future outbreaks.

Leakage also occurred from trailers parked at an industrial site and the fluid entered a drainage ditch. This incident was potentially serious. The fluid, however, settled into the bottom of a ditch; a remediation service blocked the ditch and removed the organic fluid.

The time delays experienced in detecting infection, culling birds and disposing of carcasses may have contributed to the spread of the disease. Since the outbreak, CFIA has established an interim pre-emptive cull protocol to reduce delays.

When avian influenza strikes

When avian influenza is found on a farm, the investigation must be broken down into priorities. The investigation must consider barn proximity. A barn in close proximity to other barns is at higher risk of infection than a barn in a low-density region.



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Primary priorities: It must be determined quickly if new birds were introduced into the flock recently. In addition, you should examine your farm's biosecurity to determine if wild birds are gaining or have gained access to the barn. Other high-risk events must also be examined including the sharing of equipment and entrance to barns by producers, employees, catching crews, veterinarians and others.

Secondary priorities: Next, moderate risk activities must be assessed. These include individuals with access to the anteroom but not into the barn itself. These activities would include egg pick-up and visits by repair personnel.

Low-risk activities: Low-risk activities must also be assessed but after dealing with the primary and secondary priorities. Low-risk activities include feed deliveries, visits by feed salespersons, chick placements, manure or litter removal

and delivery of litter, all when there is no entry into the poultry house.

In all cases, it is important that you practice heightened biosecurity by restricting all access to your farm and limiting travel to other poultry operations and businesses to avoid spreading the disease. Should avian influenza subtypes H5 or H7 be found on your farm, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will implement its interim pre-emptive cull protocol and establish a movement restriction zone to stop the virus from spreading.

¹. On-farm food safety programs include *Start Clean-Stay Clean™* for egg production; *Safe, Safer, Safest* for broiler production; *Canadian Hatching Egg Quality (CHEQ™)* for broiler hatching egg production; and the *On-Farm Food Safety Program* for turkey production.



Biosecurity Reminder

For chicken farmers, *Safe, Safer, Safest*, our on-farm food safety assurance program (OFFSAP) is an excellent resource for biosecurity measures that are needed on the farm. The first line of defence is to limit what comes into contact with the flock. *Safe, Safer, Safest* requires both a restricted area (within the barn) and a controlled access zone (around the outside of the barn).

The fall is also a good time to review the biosecurity regimen of your farm. Recent incidents of intentional biosecurity breaches by members of the activist community, as well as the ongoing threat of contagious animal diseases both mean that our measures need to be kept up to date.

Recent history has shown that this is the time of year that the activist community can become more active and prone to trespassing, etc. Last year, incidents were reported across Canada and we now know that this type of activity has become widespread.

This notice should also benefit our partners in other areas of our industry, including board offices, processors, service providers, restaurants and others.

Please ensure that you take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of your businesses, farms and animals.

Security reminders:

- Treat all unannounced visits by strangers with scrutiny. All requests for tours, employment, information or photographs should be verified with the highest standards for safety.
- Review all security and visitor protocols.
- Call the board office, and the police, to report any suspicious people who come onto private property, as well as any incidents, with as many details and photographs as possible.



These incidents often take place during the day, with visitors to farm properties wandering the grounds. They will sometimes acknowledge farmers who question them, saying that they are lost, or that they know the property from a long time ago, etc. Other times, they will run away without a word.

This reminds us of the importance of security, biosecurity and privacy on our farms.

Our job is to stay informed and to maintain the highest level of biosecurity possible on our farms.

Be Vigilant!

CANADIAN SUPPLY CHAIN FOOD SAFETY COALITION

On November 15, 2005, be a player in the Emergency Preparedness Session designed jointly by the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition (CSCFSC) and the Canadian government (Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada).

Date: November 15, 2005

Time: 08:00-17:00

Place: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Ottawa, ON 101 Lyon Street

Guest room reservations: 1-800-227-6963 (Single room @ \$129)

Want more information?

Contact Bryan Walton, Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, Tel.: (613) 226-6690 or Marie-Claude Thibault, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Tel.: (613) 226-4187, ext. 225.

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