

ALBERTA SheepSmart

RESOURCES FOR PRODUCERS

Photo: THagedorn, AARD



Responsible Animal Care and The Code of Practice

WHY IS MAINTAINING A HIGH LEVEL OF ANIMAL WELFARE IMPORTANT?

- **It's the right thing to do:** We all have a responsibility to ensure animals are treated humanely.
- **It's the law:** Federal and Provincial animal care laws exist in Canada.
- **It's good for business:** Quality of care impacts animal productivity, producer livelihood, and consumer acceptance of the sheep industry. The demand from retailers and the public for compliance with livestock welfare standards has increased in recent years, and will likely continue to grow in the future. Meeting high welfare standards during all stages of production provides opportunities for the industry and individual producers to secure greater stability and growth.

HOW CAN WE MEET ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS?

There are resources available to help producers achieve animal welfare goals. Consulting with your veterinarian is important if you have questions about animal well-being. Every producer should also have a copy of the voluntary **National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep** to use as a reference for every-day management decisions.

The Code of Practice serves as our national understanding of responsible animal care on sheep farms in Canada. The Code was developed by a committee of producers, veterinarians, industry specialists and animal welfare advocates. The document incorporates on-farm considerations with legal requirements and science-based, industry-accepted standards.

As well as being a valuable reference for producers, the Code clearly lays out acceptable industry standards to an increasingly urbanized public. By complying with the Code, producers can provide reassurance that the management practices used on their farms have been objectively researched and meet recognized welfare standards.



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ANIMAL WELFARE AND THE SHEEP INDUSTRY

Sheep producers in Alberta have shown a long-standing commitment to improving animal welfare through Alberta Lamb Producers' (ALP) support of Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC)—the province's industry-driven livestock welfare advocacy organization. Since AFAC's founding in 1993, ALP has worked with other organization members to develop programs for improve livestock welfare. For example, the **ALERT** helpline (1-800-506-2273) is available to anyone to report a livestock care concern. This program begins with producers helping producers to assess reported concerns and provide assistance before animals are in distress.

Visit www.afac.ab.ca to learn more about ALERT and other AFAC activities.

USING THE CODE OF PRACTICE

The 2013 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep provides background information, and details the 'Requirements' and 'Recommended Practices' for all aspects of sheep production.



'Requirements' are considered essential practices for ensuring humane treatment, and include animal care laws and regulations.

'Recommended Practices' are important practices that producers should consider implementing to optimize animal well-being. Implementing the Recommended Practices demonstrates a further commitment to animal welfare.

The Code of Practice details the Requirements and Recommended Practices to ensure:

- Feed and water management to maintain health and vigour
- A flock health management system that includes veterinary care, disease prevention and control strategies, and timely individual care
- Freedom for sheep to move and behave normally
- Handling and living conditions that minimize pain, fear and stress
- Neonatal care of lambs
- Predator and pest control
- Appropriate shelter
- Appropriate emergency planning

With the exception of legal requirements, compliance with the Code is voluntary. However, producers who follow the Code of Practice demonstrate their commitment to animal welfare and ensure their flocks have the care needed to thrive.

An **on-farm assessment tool*** is available to help producers determine if they are in compliance with the Code. By completing the assessment, producers may find they are following much of the Code, yet still identify room for improvement.

The Code of Practice is available for download from www.nfacc.ca/pdfs/codes/sheep_code_of_practice.pdf. For those without Internet access, contact the ALP office at 403-948-8533.

Growing Forward 2 can provide financial support to producers making improvements to animal welfare on their farms. Visit www.growingforward.alberta.ca or call the Alberta AgInfo line at 310-FARM for more information about producer grants.

For more information about Alberta's sheep industry visit www.ablamb.ca*, www.youtube.com/SheepCentralAlberta or contact the ALP office.