Beef Cattle Code of Practice – Feedlot

http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle

ALBERTA CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

Purpose

- National developed guidelines for the care and handling of beef cattle
- Developed through a consensus process of key stakeholders
- Purpose is to promote sound management and welfare practices for housing, care, transportation, and other animal husbandry practices
- Takes into account the best available science, practical requirements to promote consistent application across Canada, and ensure uptake by stakeholders resulting in beneficial animal outcomes

Requirements

- Regulatory requirement or industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices
- Fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals
- Consensus position that these measures, at minimum, are to be implemented by all person responsible for farm animal care
- When included in an assessment program, those that fail to implement requirements may be compelled by the industry or regulators to undertake corrective actions or risk a loss of market options

Recommended Practices

- Complement code requirements
- Promote producer education
- Encourage adoption of practices for continuous improvement in animal welfare outcomes
- Generally expected to enhance animal welfare outcomes but failure to implement does not imply that unacceptable standards of animal care are not met

Background

- Everyone handling cattle should be familiar with cattle's normal behavior and use low stress, behavior-based cattle handling techniques
- Selection and training of personnel are important factors in ensuring cattle are managed humanely
- Calm, healthy cattle have higher productivity and economic value that stressed or sick cattle

Background

- Where possible, the Code is outcome based, trying to balance the interests of cattle, producers, and consumers
- Code aims to meet scientifically valid and feasible approaches to meeting cattle health and welfare needs throughout production contributing to a sustainable and internationally competitive Canadian beef industry

Background

- Code is a guideline for the care and handling of beef cattle
- All provincial and federal acts and regulations must always take precedence
- Causing unnecessary pain or suffering or willful neglect is illegal under the Criminal Code of Canada and most provincial statutes
- Anyone witnessing animal neglect or cruelty should take action to remedy the situation by helping educate the producer or by contacting appropriate cattle producers organizations or animal welfare authorities e.g. AFAC, SPCA

1. Animal Environment

- **Desired outcomes**
  - All cattle are kept under conditions conducive to their safety, health, comfort, nourishment, and humane handling
  - Cattle can express natural behavior
  - Cattle are not adversely affected by extremes, such as cold, floods, freezing rain, storms, and heat waves

1.1 Protection from Extreme Weather

- **Requirements**
  - Cattle must have access to areas, either natural or man-made, that provide relief from weather that is likely to create a serious risk to their welfare
  - Promptly assist individual cattle showing signs of not coping with adverse weather

1.1.1 High temperature and humidity – Heat Stress

- **Clinical Signs**
  - Open-mouth panting with tongue protruding
  - Labored breathing
  - Drooling or froth around the mouth
- **Recommended Practices**
  - Provide shade
  - Avoid handling cattle
  - Feed cattle at dusk or dawn
  - Moisten the ground in parts of the pen
  - Sprinkle cattle with water

1.1.2 Extreme cold

- **Signs**
  - Shivering
  - Low core body temperature (< 35 C or 96 F)
  - Cold mouth
  - Inability to get up
  - No suckling reflex (nursing calves)
  - Frostbite of extremities (legs, ears, tail…)
- **Requirement**
  - Provide additional feed to meet animals' increased energy requirements when facing cold stress
- **Recommendation**
  - Provide bedding to insulate against bare ground and to reduce mud and manure build-up on hides, which can increase heat loss

1.2. Facilities for cattle

- **Outcome based measures to assess suitability of housing and stocking density include:**
  - Morbidity and mortality rates for lameness and injuries
  - Changes in normal cattle behavior, such as bulling/riding, poor performance (e.g. body weight, ADG, DMC, DDMI), and abnormal physical appearance

1.2 Facility – Requirements

- Access to equipment or facilities for the safe handling, restraint, treatment, segregation, loading and unloading of cattle
- Design or manage indoor and outdoor facilities to provide well-drained, comfortable resting areas
- Provide traction in handling areas to minimize cattle slips and falls
- All cattle in a group must have sufficient space to adopt normal resting postures at the same time

1.2. Facility – Requirements

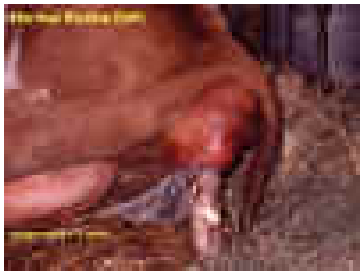
- Cattle kept in groups must have sufficient space to move freely around the pen and access feed and water
- Stocking density must be managed such that weight gain and duration of time spent lying is not adversely affected by crowding
- Maintain indoor air quality and ventilation (ammonia < 25 ppm) at all times for cattle housed indoors

1.2 Facilities – Recommended Practices

- Ensure that all cattle facilities and areas are safe and free of hazards that cause injury
- Provide a separate area with dry bedding for the recovery of severely sick or injured cattle
- Consider biosecurity measures when designing and managing cattle facilities
- Ensure restraint devices are used properly. Pressure that causes pain or discomfort can cause cattle to panic and should be avoided
- Minimize noise from handling equipment to facilitate movement. High-pitched sounds are especially disturbing to cattle

1.3 Additional facilities for calving heifers and cows

- **Requirement**
  - Provide an environment that is safe and clean for calving and that promotes calf survival
- **Recommended Practice**
  - Keep calving areas free of cattle until just prior to calving. This will minimize manure contamination and help reduce calf diseases
  - If calving indoors, be prepared to separate calving cows and heifers into pens with adequate bedding
  - Maintain calving areas and areas housing cows with young calves in such a way to reduce the contact of young calves with manure, noting that such areas become increasingly contaminated as the calving season progresses



2. Feed and Water

- **Desired Outcome**
  - Cattle are in optimum health and body condition
- **2.1 Nutrition and Feed Management Requirements**
  - Monitor cattle behavior, performance, body condition score and health on an ongoing basis and adjust the feeding program accordingly
  - Ensure cattle have access to feed of adequate quality and quantity to fulfill their nutritional needs at all times, and maintain proper body condition, taking into account factors such as: age, frame size, reproductive status, health status, level of production, competition, and weather

2.1Nutrition and Feed Management –Requirements

- Take prompt corrective action to improve the body condition score of cattle with a score of 2 or less out of 5
- Take steps to prevent exposure of cattle to toxins (such as lead batteries, fertilizer, treated seed, antifreeze, nitrates) and to avoid feed with adverse physical qualities that could cause injury or limit intake

2.1 Nutrition and Feed Management – Recommended Practices

- Test nutrient content of feed ingredients used and balance rations as necessary. Consult a nutritionist or veterinarian for advice
- Become familiar with potential micronutrient deficiencies or excesses in your geographic area and use appropriately– formulated supplements

2.1 Nutrition and Feed Management – Recommended Practices

- Manage feedstuffs in a way to maintain quality and minimize spoilage
- Avoid sudden or extreme ration changes
- Provide a less competitive feeding environment for sick, injured, weak or convalescing cattle

2.2 Water

- **Requirements**
  - Ensure that cattle have access to palatable water of adequate quality and quantity to fulfill their physiological needs
  - Monitor water sources, feeding habits, behavior, performance and health on an ongoing basis and be prepared to adjust the watering program accordingly
  - Have a back-up water source in the event of an interruption in water supply

2.2 Water

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Ensure water sources are easy for cattle to locate and access
  - Manage cattle and water sources daily to ensure they are dispensing properly
  - Check automated water sources daily to ensure they are dispensing properly
  - Test water quality in event of problems such as poor performance, reluctance to drink, or reduced feed consumption
  - Be aware of signs of stray (tingle) voltage around water sources, such as a reluctance to drink or reduced feed consumption

3. Animal Health

- **Desired Outcome**
  - Optimum health and welfare are maintained through a combination of appropriate disease prevention and control measures and prompt treatment of illness, injury, and disease
- **3.1 Herd Health Management**
  - **Requirement**
    - Establish an ongoing working relationship (VCPR) with a licensed practicing veterinarian and develop a strategy for disease prevention and herd health
  - **Recommended Practice**
    - Maintain accurate animal management and health records

3.2 Sick, Injured and Cull Cattle

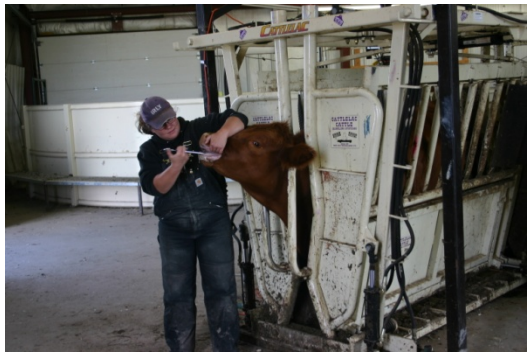
- **Requirements**
  - Monitor health on an ongoing basis to ensure prompt treatment or care
  - Provide appropriate care, convalescence or treatment for sick, injured or lame cattle without delay
  - Monitor the animals' response to therapy or care and, if the initial treatment protocol fails, then reassess treatment options or seek veterinary advice

3.2 Sick, Injured and Cull Cattle

- **Requirements**
  - Euthanize (or cull*) without delay cattle that:
    - Are unlikely to recover, or
    - Fail to respond to treatment and convalescent protocols, or
    - Have chronic, severe, or debilitating pain and distress, or
    - Are unable to get to or consume feed and water, or
    - Show continuous weight loss or emaciation
    - * if culling, requirements for transporting compromised animals must be followed (Section 5. Transportation). Suspicion of a reportable disease as defined by the Health of Animals Act www.laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/H-3.3 and various provincial acts must be brought to the attention of a veterinarian

3.2 Sick, Injured and Cull Cattle

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Consult a veterinarian to address new, unknown, or suspicious diseases or death losses
  - Consult a veterinarian if the incidence of a known disease suddenly increases
  - Consult a veterinarian for the most appropriate treatment options when an animal is sick
  - Monitor the progress of treated cattle
  - Dispose of dead cattle according to applicable provincial/municipal regulations



3.3.1 Managing Bovine Respiratory Disease

- **Requirements**
  - Monitor the behavior of newly-arrived feedlot cattle to facilitate the early detection of disease
  - Have a disease prevention strategy for new arrivals at the feedlot
- **Recommended Practices**
  - Categorize newly-arrived cattle according to risk for BRD and other diseases and apply appropriate receiving protocols
  - Whenever possible, buy calves of known source, vaccination history, and health status

3.3.2 Lameness

- **Requirements**
  - Provide appropriate care, convalescence, or treatment for lame cattle without delay
  - Monitor animals' response to therapy or care, and if the initial treatment protocol fails, then reassess treatment options or seek veterinary advice
  - Promptly cull or euthanize lame cattle that have a poor prognosis for recovery or that do not respond to therapy or care

3.3.2 Lameness

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Manage pen conditions to minimize mud and standing water
  - Work with your veterinarian to identify and resolve sudden increases in the incidence of lameness

3.3.3 Nutritional Disorders

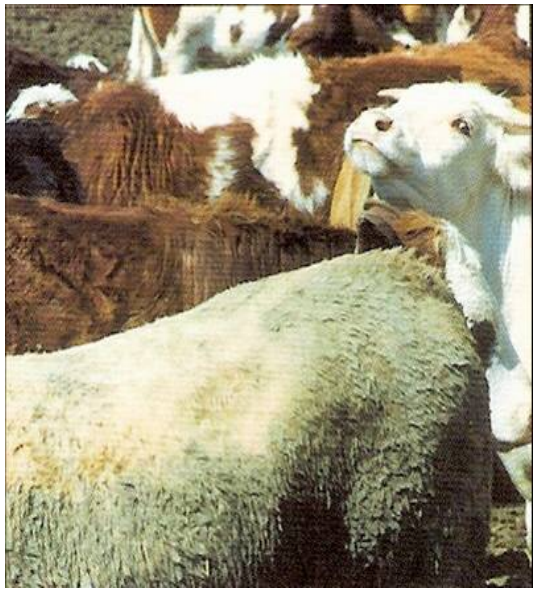
- **Requirements**
  - Design, implement, evaluate, and adjust your feeding program to reduce the risk of nutrition-induced disorders (e.g. bloat, grain overload), and consult your veterinarian or a nutritionist when needed
  - Transition cattle from high-forage to high-energy rations, gradually to avoid abrupt dietary changes

3.3.3 Nutritional Disorders

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Monitor feed bunks to assess prior consumption and adjust feed accordingly
  - Include forage of effective particle length in all diets to reduce sub-acute ruminal acidiosis (grain overload)
  - Consider adjusting rations to prevent digestive disorders when cattle feed intake is interrupted (due to storm, power outage, machinery breakdown, etc.)

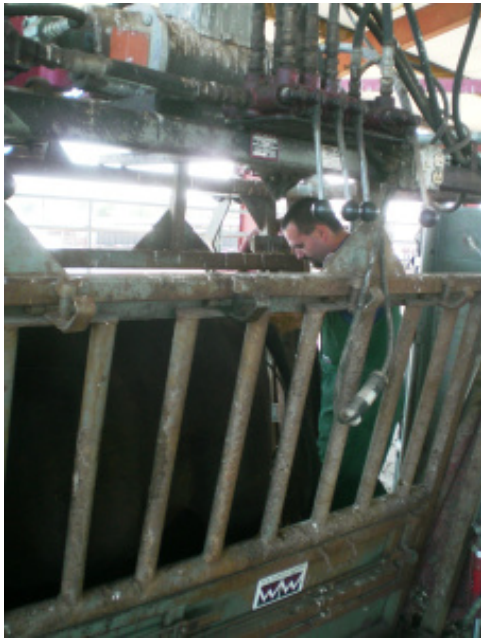
3.3.4 Buller-Steer Syndrome

- **Requirements**
  - Bullers must be promptly removed from their pen
- **Recommended Practices**
  - Monitor closely for relapse if bullers are reintroduced to their home pen



3.3.5 Managing Pregnant Heifers

- **Requirements**
  - Consult with your veterinarian to develop a program for managing pregnant heifers
- **Recommended Practices**
  - If spaying heifers, it must be done by a veterinarian using appropriate pain management



3.4. Safety and Emergencies

- **Requirements**
  - Have a current emergency response plan to provide feed, water, and care for cattle in case of emergencies
  - Review this plan with all responsible personnel so it can be implemented
  - Ensure emergency contact numbers are readily accessible and current

4. Animal Husbandry

- **Desired Outcome**
  - Cattle experience minimal stress and discomfort, while necessary husbandry tasks are carried out properly, safely, and in a timely fashion
- **4.1 Handling and Moving Cattle**
  - **Requirements**
    - animal handlers must be familiar with cattle behavior, through training, experience or mentorship, and use quiet handling techniques

4.1 Handling and Moving Cattle

- **Requirements**
  - Electric prods must only be used to assist movement of cattle when animal or human safety is at risk or as a last resort when all other humane alternatives have failed and only when cattle have a clear path to move
  - Do not use electric prods repeatedly on the same animal
  - Do not use electric prods on the genitals, face, udder or anal areas
  - Do not use electric prods on calves less than 3 months of age that can be moved manually

4.1 Handling and Moving Cattle

- **Requirements**
  - Willful mistreatment or intentional harm of cattle is unacceptable. This includes but is not limited to: beating an animal, slamming gates on animals, allowing herd dogs to continue pushing cattle with nowhere to move, dragging or pushing cattle with machinery (unless to protect animal or human safety)

4.1 Handling and Moving Cattle

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Adjust your handling techniques and positioning according to the response of the animals and the situation
  - Take a course in cattle handling techniques
  - Use handling tools, such as flags, plastic paddles or rattles, to direct animal movement
  - Evaluate your cattle handling techniques regularly, and make improvements as needed:
    - Falls or slips
    - Vocalizing
    - Jumping or running when leaving the chute

4.2 Reproductive and Calving Management in Feedlots

- **Requirements**
  - Calving heifers/cows must be monitored to identify calving difficulties and ensure prompt assistance when required
  - Monitor and promptly assist calves and recently-calved heifers/cows showing signs of distress
  - C sections must be conducted by a veterinarian using accepted surgical techniques and appropriate local anesthesia and post-operative pain control
  - Spaying must be carried out by a veterinarian using appropriate pain control

4.2 Reproductive and Calving Management in Feedlots

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Ensure proper use of equipment designed for pulling calves
  - Observe young calves regularly to ensure they are adequately nourished and are healthy

4.2.1 Colostrum Management

- **Requirements**
  - Monitor newborn calves to ensure they suckle their dams, paying special attention to high risk calves
  - Administer colostrum or commercial colostrum substitute to any newborn calf showing signs of not having received it by suckling
- **Recommended Practices**
  - Administer 2 L of colostrum to calves that have not suckled within 6 hours of birth. Intervene earlier in cold weather
  - Learn to safely use an esophageal feeder in administering colostrum to calves that can't suckle
  - Obtain supplemental colostrum from milk from dam, pooled colostrum from other cows, commercial colostral substitute

4.3 Identification

- **Requirements**
  - All cattle must be identified by a CCIA RFID eartag
  - When branding is required for export, by policy, or as permanent proof of ownership, it must be performed using proper equipment, restraint and by personnel with training or sufficient knowledge and experience to minimize pain to the animal
  - Do not brand wet cattle due to risk of scalding

4.3 Identification

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Brand size must be appropriate to the size of animal
  - Avoid rebranding cattle
  - Do not wattle or split ears to ID cattle
  - Consult your vet for advice on the availability and feasibility of controlling pain associated with branding
  - Maintain all cattle identification equipment in good working order

4.4. Dehorning

- **Requirements**
  - Dehorning must be performed by competent personnel using proper, well-maintained tools and accepted techniques
  - Seek guidance from your veterinarian on the availability and advisability of pain control for dehorning cattle
    - Effective January 1, 2016 pain control must be used when dehorning feedlot cattle

4.5 Castration

- **Requirements**
  - Castration must be performed by competent personnel using proper clean, well-maintained instruments and accepted techniques
  - Seek advice from your veterinarian on the optimum method and timing of castration, as well as the availability and advisability of pain control when castrating cattle
  - Effective January 1, 2016
    - Pain control must be used when castrating bulls older than 9 months of age
  - Effective January 1, 2018
    - Pain control must be used when castrating bulls older than 6 months of age

4.5 Castration

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Consult your veterinarian about pain mitigation strategies for castration
  - Ensure that tetanus vaccinations are current if applying bands
  - Monitor cattle after castration for infection and/or abnormal post-surgical bleeding

4.7 Predator Control

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Be aware of predation risks in your area and implement control measures to reduce injury, undue distress, or death of cattle
  - Ensure control measures do not put additional risk on cattle being protected e.g. poison, traps

4.8 Tail Docking

- **Requirement**
  - Do not tail dock cattle unless on the advice of a veterinarian
- **Recommended Practices**
  - When new facilities are being built, design them to prevent tail injury and subsequent infection
  - Reduce stocking density in slatted floor barns to reduce tail injuries

5. Transportation

- **Desired Outcome**
  - Cattle arrive at their destination in good condition

5.1 Pre-Transport Decision Making and Preparation for Transport

- **Requirements**
  - Unfit cattle must not be transported unless for veterinary diagnosis or treatment under the advice of a veterinarian
  - Compromised animals may only be transported with special provisions and directly to their final destination
  - Cattle must receive feed and water within 5 hours prior to loading if transport will exceed 24 hours
  - Cows or heifers likely to give birth during the journey must not be transported unless for veterinary diagnosis or treatment
  - Ensure that any loading and unloading equipment, chutes or conveyances are free of hazards in order to minimize the risk of injury
    - Reference: Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII

5.2 Arranging Transport

- **Requirements**
  - Transporters must follow current federal and provincial animal transport requirements
  - Cattle must be transported by competent personnel through training, experience or mentorship, using safe, well-maintained equipment
  - The right of the transporter to refuse to load cattle that s/he deems unfit for transport must be respected. The reason for refusal must be addressed
  - Cattle producers and transporters must immediately report instances of inhumane handling to proper authorities

CLT
Certified Livestock Transporter

5.2 Arranging Transport

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Be familiar with the appropriate regulations and the Code of Practice – Transportation
  - Respect the recommendations of an experienced transporter to adjust loading densities to current weather conditions and weight restrictions
  - Ensure that all required documentation is completed to avoid unnecessary delays at inspection stations, borders, or other checkpoints
  - Provide cattle transporters with the telephone number of the home or office of the shipper and receiver to immediately report an emergency situation
  - Avoid long distance transport in extremely hot, humid temperatures to prevent animal suffering
  - Consider evening loading to avoid transport during the hottest hours of the day

5.3 Loading and Receiving

- **Requirements**
  - Do not load or unload cattle in a manner that is likely to cause injury or undue suffering
  - Cattle must be able to stand in normal posture without coming into contact with the roof or upper deck of the vehicle
  - Cattle that arrive unable to rise and walk unassisted (nonambulatory) must be examined on arrival and their likelihood of recovery assessed. Cattle must not be dragged from the vehicle while conscious; they must be humanely stunned and euthanized on the vehicle prior to unloading. Once unloaded, a stunned animal must be confirmed dead or euthanized. If an animal is likely to recover, it must only be unloaded for vet treatment under the advice of a veterinarian

5.3 Loading and Receiving

- **Requirements**
  - Segregate cattle that are incompatible by reason of their nature, temperament, sex, weight or age
  - Ensure that cattle have proper ventilation, are protected from extreme weather such as extreme cold, wind chill or extreme heat
  - Provide safe and secure footholds (footing) or adequate bedding to prevent cattle from slipping and falling

5.3 Loading and Receiving

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Avoid loading cattle at densities greater than recommended in the Code of Practice – Transportation. Cattle should be provided with enough floor space in a vehicle to maintain their balance and change position within the compartment
  - Eliminate gaps between the end of the loading ramp and the vehicle
  - Ensure the loading area promotes smooth flow of cattle on or off the vehicle
  - Avoid significant changes in floor height or distractions

5.3 Loading and Receiving

- **Recommended Practices**
  - During extreme weather, cattle waiting for loading or waiting for further actions after unloading should be able to access well drained, sheltered areas with access to water
  - Schedule loading and transport to avoid long delays in transit e.g. borders or at final destination e.g. packing plants
  - Feedlots should be equipped with personnel or facilities to meet receiving animal's needs upon arrival, such as water and feed

6. On-Farm Euthanasia

- **Desired Outcome**: cattle are euthanized when necessary in a timely and effective manner.
- **6.1 Euthanasia and Culling Decisions**
  - **Requirements**
    - Euthanize (or cull*) without delay cattle that
      - Are unlikely to recover, or
      - Fail to respond to treatment and convalescent protocols, or
      - Have chronic, severe, or debilitating pain and distress, or
      - Are unable to get to or consume feed and water, or
      - Show continuous weight loss or emaciation
        - * if culling, CFIA requirements for transporting compromised animals must be followed

6.2 Methods of On-Farm Euthanasia

- **Requirements**
  - An acceptable method for euthanizing feedlot cattle must be used i.e. gunshot (22 Magnum or high powered rifle or shot gun) or penetrating captive bolt device or approved euthanasia drugs administered by your veterinarian
  - Euthanasia must be performed by competent personnel through training, experience, or mentorship
  - Equipment used for euthanasia must be maintained according to manufacturers' instructions to ensure proper function
  - Non-ambulatory cattle may not be dragged or forced to move prior to euthanasia

6.2 Methods of On-Farm Euthanasia

- **Recommended Practices**
  - Avoid moving or handling cattle more than necessary prior to euthanasia
  - Restrain cattle as necessary for euthanasia, choosing the safest and least stressful method of restraint possible

6.3 Confirmation of Insensibility and Death

- **Requirements**
  - Evaluate the animal's consciousness immediately after the application of the appropriate euthanasia method by checking for a corneal reflex
  - Be prepared to immediately deliver a second application should the first attempt not render the animal immediately insensible
  - Confirm death before moving or leaving the animal
  - Confirm insensibility
    - Touch the eyeball and note if the animal blinks (corneal reflex). An insensible animal will not blink.

6.3 Confirmation of Insensibility and Death

- Confirm death: A lack of heartbeat and respiration should be used to confirm death
  - Evaluate heartbeat by physical palpation or by placing a stethoscope over the left lower chest area of the animal, just behind the elbow
  - Evaluate respiration by observing the chest for any breathing movement.
    - Note that breathing may be slow and erratic in an unconscious animal

Questions?