

September 18, 2024
The Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1A 0A4

Re: Bill C-275, *An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms)*

Dear Honourable Senators,

The undersigned agricultural organizations write on behalf of our respective members to highlight the perspectives and concerns of farmers regarding the critical issue of ensuring biosecurity on farms. This matter is currently under consideration in the Senate as Bill C-275, *An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act* (biosecurity on farms) and presently before the AGFO Committee.

Collectively, we represent the more than 190,000 farmers and farm families from coast to coast to coast that are at the heart of a Canadian agri-food system generating \$150 billion of Canada's gross domestic product and employing 2.3 million people.

Biosecurity measures on Canadian livestock farms

Canadian producers have long been recognized as leaders in advancing animal welfare and implementing robust on-farm biosecurity measures. Across all livestock and animal agriculture sectors, farmers enforce strict biosecurity protocols to safeguard the health, safety, and comfort of their livestock, which apply to farmers, their employees, and all authorized visitors. They closely monitor their animals and adhere to rigorous biosecurity standards to prevent the spread of disease. Examples of these efforts are demonstrated by the sector's participation in the following industry-led, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)-recognized programs:

- proAction® (<https://www.dairyfarmers.ca/proaction>)
- Canadian Hatching Egg Quality (CHEQ™) program (<https://chep-poic.ca/cheq.html>)
- *Raised by a Canadian Farmer* On-Farm Food Safety Program (<https://www.chickenfarmers.ca/safe-chicken/>)
- Verified Beef Production Plus (<https://verifiedbeef.ca/>)
- Start Clean-Stay Clean® (https://www.eggfarmers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2023-10-26_On-farm-program-requirements_Fact-sheet.pdf)
- TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program & TFC Flock Care Program (<https://www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca/on-the-farm/>)
- PigSAFE program (<https://www.cpc-ccp.com/pigsafe>)

Biosecurity controls outlined in such programs show significant results in reducing disease, contributing to human food safety, and maintaining Canada's strong domestic and international reputation of producing high-quality agricultural products. Steps in these programs often involve restricting visitors' access to animals, ensuring high standards of cleanliness, sanitation, and maintenance on-farm, proactive measures to avoid disease risk, among other things.

With that said, trespassers on farm properties can severely compromise the health, safety, and comfort of the animals that Canadian farmers take such care to protect, while also compromising the mental health and wellbeing of the farmers themselves.

Currently, there are a number of diseases which cause great concern to Canadian producers, as they carry the potential for detrimental outcomes on their farms and to Canadian food security should they be introduced to their animals. These including the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza and African Swine Fever. By strengthening the system that safeguards farm animals, farmers, and their employees from the risks posed by trespassers—whether intentional or unintentional—farmers can maintain their strong record of delivering safe and nutritious food products to Canadians.

Potential consequences of trespassing on livestock farms

Trespassing intrusions can be highly distressing and pose significant risks to the health, safety, and comfort of animals. Additionally, when individuals enter farm properties without following necessary precautions and preventative measures, they pose a serious risk to farm biosecurity, whether they realize it or not. They may inadvertently bring in contaminants or disease pathogens that are harmful to animals. This could result in the culling of entire flocks and herds or the closure of trade borders for affected animals and related products, resulting in significant costs for industry and government. Furthermore, in some cases, disease exposure may escalate the need for antibiotics, undermining the industry's efforts to combat antibiotic resistance.

Beyond biosecurity risks, trespassers jeopardize the safety and welfare of both animals and themselves. Unfamiliar visitors can stress animals, leading to erratic behavior and a higher risk of injury. Additionally, stressed animals are shown to be more likely to develop health problems in the future.

Mental health impacts of trespassing on farms

Trespassing on farms significantly impacts the mental health of farmers, their families, and employees, causing heightened anxiety about animal safety, the spread of disease, livestock loss, and the risk of unfair or inaccurate media portrayals leading to undue public scrutiny or media attention. These intrusions threaten livelihoods by disrupting production and causing financial losses. Additionally, because livestock farms are not just a place of business, but also where farmers and ranchers live and raise their families, trespassing violates the personal space and privacy of both farmers and their animals, undermining their sense of security.

Farmers and their employees are devoted to the animals under their care, and biosecurity breaches can result in illness, injury, or death of the animals, leading to emotional grief or trauma. Managing the aftermath of a biosecurity breach results in increased workload and exhaustion (clean-up, increased monitoring and security measures, and dealing with legal matters) which can negatively impact mental health significantly.

About Bill C-275 (*An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act*)

Bill C-275, *An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act*, if passed, would provide targeted interventions to on-farm food safety and biosecurity risks by limiting the access of unauthorized entrants to farm animals. C-275, while adding additional safeguards into legislation to strengthen biosecurity protections also maintains the rights of Canadian citizens to peaceful protest in public spaces. It is our belief that Bill C-

275 will help to protect the wellbeing of animals by mitigating the risk of exposure to trespassers who may knowingly or unknowingly transfer disease pathogens or other biosecurity harms. Bill C-275 will support government initiatives, such as national biosecurity standards and principles developed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). It also aligns with the Government of Canada's 2024 *Pan-Canadian Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance* (PCAP on AMR) which aims to support the increased implementation of enhanced infection prevention control and biosecurity and improve animal health and food safety to prevent and limit the spread of infection and foodborne pathogens.

Canadian farmers take care to ensure they produce the highest quality food all while ensuring the safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of the animals in their care, however, farmers alone cannot prevent breaches of biosecurity. Governments across Canada, including the Canadian Government, must also play their part to ensure the health of animals and farmers are protected. C-275 would achieve this by filling a critical gap in legislation by focusing on biosecurity risks rather than on trespassing alone. While several provincial governments have put in place legislation to prevent trespassing on farms, these laws are not uniform across the country and consistency is crucial.

Conclusion

In conclusion, biosecurity on farms is of great importance to Canadian producers, as well as to Canadians as a whole, as breaches in biosecurity can result in the loss of animals which would impact food security, jeopardize the national food supply, affect international trade relations and the economy, and impact the mental health and wellbeing of producers, their families, and employees. Canadian farmers ask for your support of Bill C-275, *An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms)* to help ensure the continued biosecurity, safety, and wellbeing of Canadian farms and farm products.

If you have any questions regarding this issue, please don't hesitate to reach out to Brodie Berrigan, Senior Director of Government Relations and Farm Policy (brodie@canadian-farmers.ca).

Sincerely,

Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Meat Council
National Cattle Feeders' Association
Canadian Pork Council

