

FAQ Infosheet



What is the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equine*?

The Codes of Practice are national developed guidelines for the care and handling of farm animals. They serve as our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices. Codes promote sound management and welfare practices for housing, care, transportation and other animal husbandry practices. The Codes of Practice are the result of a rigorous Code development process, taking into account the best science available for each species, compiled through an independent peer-reviewed process, along with stakeholder input. The Code development process also takes into account the practical requirements for each species necessary to promote consistent application across Canada and ensure uptake by stakeholders resulting in beneficial animal outcomes.



What is the difference between a “Requirement” and a “Recommended Practice”

Requirements - These refer to either a regulatory requirement, or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices and are fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals. Requirements represent a consensus position that these measures, at minimum, are to be implemented by all persons responsible for farm animal care. When included as part of an assessment program, those who fail to implement Requirements may be compelled by industry associations to undertake corrective measures, or risk a loss of market options. Requirements also may be enforceable under federal and provincial regulation.

Recommended Practices - Code Recommended Practices may complement a Code’s Requirements, promote producer education and can encourage adoption of practices for continuous improvement in animal welfare outcomes. Recommended Practices are those which are generally expected to enhance animal welfare outcomes, but failure to implement them does not imply that acceptable standards of animal care are not met.

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What are the Five Freedoms?

An animal's welfare¹ should be considered in terms of the Five Freedoms (below). These freedoms form a framework for analysis of welfare within any system and those responsible for equines are encouraged to consider the Five Freedoms.^{2,3}

- Freedom from Hunger and Thirst - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- Freedom from Discomfort - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- Freedom from Pain, Injury and Disease - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- Freedom from Fear and Distress - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.



All herd sizes require adequate human resources to ensure observation, care and welfare of individual animals. Neither financial cost nor any other circumstances should result in a delay in treatment or neglect of the animals.

¹ The National Farm Animal Care Council supports the following definition of animal welfare: Animal welfare means how an animal is coping physically, physiologically and psychologically with the conditions in which it lives. Physically includes pain and injury; physiologically includes environmental or disease stressors; and psychologically includes stressors that affect the senses, especially those that result in fear, fighting, distress or stereotypic behaviours due to either frustration or boredom. Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal; the treatment that an animal receives is covered by other terms such as animal care, animal husbandry, and humane treatment.

² Farm Animal Welfare Council. Five Freedoms. Available: www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm

³ The Five Freedoms are referenced by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), of which Canada is a member, in its Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Section 7 - Animal Welfare)

* Excerpted from "Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines" (2013)