

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle

A Brief Summary of Draft Code Updates

The [2013 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle](#) (the Code) has been under review by the Code Committee (CC), with the goal of improving clarity, addressing emerging animal-welfare concerns, and strengthening guidance in areas that were under-represented in earlier versions. Following this review, many sections were expanded to provide clearer expectations, more practical guidance, and updated Requirements that reflect current science, regulations, and industry practices. A brief summary of the main updates to the draft Code is below.

1. Animal Environment

This chapter contains updates to heat and cold stress content, along with facility expectations. A focus was placed on increased monitoring of cattle to provide timely assistance to animals not coping in adverse weather.

- **Mud and Moisture:** A new section was added to describe the welfare impacts of mud and moisture, including reduced coat insulation and foot health problems.
- **Facilities:** Along with updates for clarity, the Requirements for facilities were updated to emphasize the need for safe, low-stress cattle movement that protects both cattle and handlers. Additional updates were made to include considerations for housing severely sick or injured cattle.

2. Feed and Water

This chapter now places greater emphasis on monitoring nutrition, preventing poor body condition, and ensuring reliable water access. Associated appendices related to body condition have been updated with more realistic cattle images.

- **Nutrition and Feed Risks:** The chapter includes guidance on feed and water testing, toxic feeds, feed bunk management, and use of nutritionists.
- **Body Condition:** In addition to requiring corrective action for cattle with BCS 2/5 or lower, Requirements were enhanced to ensure action is taken to prevent body-condition decline when cattle reach 2.5/5.
- **Snow as Water:** The importance of attentive monitoring of cattle when using snow as a water source was emphasized. Updates were made to Requirements to provide additional detail around when it is acceptable to use snow as a water source.

3. Animal Health

This chapter was expanded, with detailed guidance around veterinary care and herd health management, disease reporting, and emergency preparedness.

- **Veterinary Care:** Requirements and Recommended Practices were enhanced to further emphasize the importance of an active Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship, working with a veterinarian, and developing and regularly updating a herd health program.
- **Health Conditions:** More content was added on several conditions that are important for animal welfare, particularly to expand the information relevant to the cow-calf sector. New subsections within this chapter include reproductive disease, neurologic disease, and pink eye.

4. Animal Husbandry

This section emphasizes low-stress handling, provides more guidance for non-ambulatory cattle, and includes enhanced expectations for providing pain control for various management procedures.

- **Low-Stress Handling:** Information was increased on low-stress handling and behavioural signs of stress. Expectations for unacceptable prod use were rewritten and clarified.
- **Non-Ambulatory Cattle:** A new section was drafted, outlining Requirements for prompt care, safe handling, appropriate lifting tools, and access to feed and water for non-ambulatory cattle.
- **Reproduction and Calving:** Expanded content now includes a calving decision tree and updated guidance, including reducing the ideal window to receive colostrum from 6 to 4 hours after birth.
- **Pain Control for Painful Procedures:** Pain mitigation expectations have been enhanced, Requirements for pain control to be given in consultation with a veterinarian for:
 - assisted difficult calvings
 - spaying (must be carried out by a veterinarian using pain control)
 - branding calves under 6 months (and **all** cattle starting Jan 1, 2032)
 - disbudding/dehorning (previously phased in as of Jan 1, 2016 in the 2013 Code)
 - castration for all ages of cattle
- **Weaning:** The section was expanded with new Recommended Practices, as well as a new Requirement for increased monitoring after weaning. This section is sub-divided to provide specific guidance on pre-weaning, weaning, and post-weaning periods.

5. Preparation for Transport

National transport regulations (the Health of Animals Regulations) have significantly expanded since 2013, which heavily influenced the updates to this section of the Code.

- **Regulatory compliance:** New Requirements were drafted to align with updated transport regulations. Some Requirements were removed to avoid duplication of these regulations, while the remaining Requirements were reviewed and updated to ensure consistency and accuracy. The Requirements and Recommended Practices in this chapter focus on assessing fitness for transport and enhanced guidance around preparations for transport.
- **Appendices:** Transportation appendices were updated to include current CFIA guidance.

6. Euthanasia

This chapter now includes more practical, clear guidance for euthanasia methods and decision making. Updates were made to include references to farmer-specific mental health resources.

- **Euthanasia methods:** The table of acceptable methods for euthanasia was updated to be more user-friendly, while also increasing specificity around appropriate firearms and ammunition for different classes of cattle.
- **Updated images:** Images depicting the appropriate landmarks for firearm euthanasia were updated.

The Public Comment Period (PCP) of the draft Code is available for review and comment since April 13, 2026, and will close on June 12, 2026.

Link to participate in the Beef Cattle Code of Practice PCP: <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle>