

Canadian Beef Advisors – Industry Goals to 2030

Animal Health and Care Goals

These goals are not presented in any particular order:

- Ensure the five freedoms of animal wellbeing by increasing adoption of on-farm management practices
 - a. Attain 92% reproductive efficiency in Canadian beef production (85% in 2018)
 - b. Adopt management and breeding choices that support animal welfare (e.g. calving ease, polled genes, pain relief)
 - c. Establish and maintain a surveillance system to monitor cattle production practices across Canada
- Ensure the effectiveness of existing and future antimicrobials is preserved to support human and animal health and welfare
 - a. Develop, monitor and disseminate best practices regarding antimicrobial use
 - b. Quantify and describe baseline antibiotic use practices in Canadian feedlot production
 - c. Determine and monitor antibiotic resistance profiles in bacteria of concern in feedlot cattle

Context

The Canadian beef industry is committed to protecting the health and welfare the cattle under our care. Producers are already providing a high level of care that must be recognized. These goals recognize that and push industry to continue striving for excellence.

Canada's beef industry is a global leader in recognizing the importance of appropriate beef cattle health and care practices, having developed the first Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle more than 20 years before the OIE adopted an animal welfare chapter to the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Ensuring animal health and welfare, which is of increasing interest to the retail and foodservice sectors, consumers and the public (social sustainability), also contributes to improved reproductive and growth performance (economic sustainability), which in turn have significant impacts on resource use and greenhouse gas emission intensity (environmental sustainability).

In setting these goals industry is aiming to build government and public support for beef production and its activities through a clear consistent message that addresses the challenges faced head on while also communicating its benefits.

How the goals could be achieved

Accomplishing these goals requires the commitment of the seedstock, cow-calf, and feeding (backgrounding and finishing) sectors. The table below provides key drivers that can contribute to achieving the various goals. Specific targets have been set for certain areas to give clarity and direction. The targets established here were based on historical and current adoption rates reported in a series of producer surveys conducted across Canada. More information on these surveys is available in the 2019 report entitled "[Adoption Rates of Recommended Practices by Cow-Calf Operators in Canada](#)". As part of the process, veterinarians were consulted to evaluate how realistic the goals are.

It is important to recognize that some drivers may have diminishing returns influenced by biological limits, and the potential for further improvement declines as the recommended practices achieve high rates of adoption. No target is expected to reach 100%. However, many of these practices are known to have mutual benefits for both animal health and welfare as well as for producers' economic sustainability.

Herd health management	Nutritional management	Preparing calves for the feedlot
<p>Increased adoption of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of producers have a valid Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship • 85% of producers have a prevention-based herd health plan • 95% of producers vaccinate cows for reproductive diseases (BVD, IBR – 74% West, 67% On) • 95% of producers vaccinate calves for clostridial diseases (93% west) • 85% of producers aware of the Requirements in the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (47%, 2017) 	<p>Increase adoption of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of producers design and manage their feeding programs to ensure that animals' nutritional needs are met • Body condition scoring, feed testing (60% west, 25-34% east) and ration balancing • Pasture and grazing management practices that optimize plant and animal productivity and nutritional quality 	<p>Increased adoption of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of producers vaccinate calves for respiratory disease (77-84% West) • 65% of producers adopt low stress weaning practices (33%-51%, 2017) • Nutritional management
Excellence in animal health	Excellence in animal care	Feedlot management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% increase in the number of individuals trained in on-farm food safety, animal welfare, biosecurity and associated record keeping practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85% of producers castrate and dehorn following veterinary recommendations and/or pain control requirements in the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (45-50%, 2017) • 10% of fed cattle carry horns at slaughter (9%, 2017) • 85% of fed cattle have a tag score of 4 or less (0 = clean, dry and 10 = very dirty, wet) 	<p>Better understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antimicrobial use practices • Antimicrobial resistance patterns • Opportunities to further improve animal management, health and welfare practices
	Research and Development	Technology transfer
	<p>Basic and applied research to investigate, develop and evaluate products and practices to support, maintain or improve animal nutrition, health, welfare, antimicrobial use and management practices throughout the beef industry.</p>	<p>Use traditional and novel expertise and approaches to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure producers are aware of new products and practices • encourage adoption where appropriate • monitor adoption of best practices

FAQs

Q: What does reproductive efficiency have to do with animal health and care?

A: Cows and heifers that are in poor health, poor nutritional status or otherwise neglected have not been met are much less likely to cycle, become pregnant, successfully give birth to a live calf, raise it to weaning age, and rebreed the next year. Ensuring that as many heifers and cows as possible successfully (re)breed and wean a healthy calf year after year requires that very close attention be paid to their health and welfare on an ongoing basis.

Q: Why isn't there a goal around antibiotic use reduction or elimination?

A: Antibiotics (and other antimicrobials) are critically important animal health tools, and recommending that treatment be withheld from sick cattle would detract from animal health and welfare. Setting antibiotic use reduction goals cannot be done responsibly until current antimicrobial use practices have been described and understood (which is one of the goals).

Q: What is the baseline year for the targets?

A: The baseline year will vary based on the source data available. For example, metrics using the Cow-calf surveys will be from 2016-17 (see the Adoption Rates report for details). While on-farm food safety training programs will use a 2019 calendar year baseline. For the Vet-Client-Patient-Relationship and herd health plan no baselines are available; but questions are being added to the next Farm Management Survey.

Q: Why isn't there a target to reduce the prevalence of branding?

A: [Canada's National Beef Quality Audit](#) has documented a significant decline in recent years, but eliminating branding is not a reasonable expectation. Branding is a legal requirement in some cases (e.g. some cattle finance programs, breeding stock exported to the US).

Q: Why isn't there a specific target around the prevalence of the polled gene to eliminate the need for dehorning and pain mitigation?

A: The prevalence of polled cattle in the national herd will be impacted by crossbreeding and the performance benefits that will contribute to reaching the greenhouse gas goals. While polled genetics are encouraged it is also recognized that other factors will influence producer breeding decisions.

The horned/polled trait is under genetic control, and a genetic test is available for dairy cattle. However, many genetic tests are not equally reliable in all breeds or crossbreds, and genetic tests are not commercially available for all Canadian beef breeds at this point.

Q: I see timely euthanasia as a very serious welfare issue - can you comment on where it fits in your goals and plan?

A: Canada's 2013 [Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle](#) has requirements and guidance pertaining to euthanasia decision making, methods, and confirming insensibility and death, and awareness of the Code's requirements is a goal.

Q: Why isn't there a target around bruising?

A: Canada's National Beef Quality Audit has recorded significant reductions in the prevalence of bruising, as well as the prevalence of severe bruising over the years. These improvements are likely due to reductions in the prevalence of horned cattle, improvements in the design and maintenance of animal handling facilities on farms, auction marts and packing plants, improved handling practices, and improved cattle transportation practices. Numerous requirements in Canada's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle pertain to these factors, and awareness of the Code's requirements is a goal.

Q: Why isn't there a target around liver abscesses?

A: It was decided not to set a goal to reduce liver abscesses until there is a cost-effective way to reduce it. Research is underway and we are confident that industry will respond when a solution is available.

Q: Why do the animal care action items focus on primary production but not transportation or packing plants?

A: Transportation and packing facilities are both legally regulated by the CFIA. Research has shown that adverse welfare outcomes are extremely rare when Canadian beef cattle are transported in Canada. In many cases, packing plant processes are also informed by customer requirements and audits which can be even stricter.

Q: Was the cost of implementing these goals and action items calculated?

A: There are costs to producers in changing practices to achieve these goals. However, many of these goals will also contribute to animal productivity and production efficiencies. Producers have historically adopted and invested in practices that are economical and provide value. Best practices tend to be quickly adopted when they are practical, and when individual operations understand the economic benefits of doing so. We feel that coming years will present significant opportunities to increase the interactions between producers with their veterinarians as well as other technology transfer agents, facilitating the awareness, understanding and adoption of best practices.

Historically incremental improvements have been made with a focus on production efficiencies and economic viability. When the entire system is considered, there are efficiencies and gains to be made that would benefit producers and the entire supply chain. In addition, investments maybe needed that lead to quality and improved economic outcomes.

For further information, go to: Beefstrategy.com