

SUMMER 1999  
Issue 29



**NEWSLETTER**  
CANADIANS FOR ETHICAL TREATMENT OF FOOD ANIMALS

website: [www.cetfa.com](http://www.cetfa.com) • email: [care@cetfa.com](mailto:care@cetfa.com)

P.O. Box 18024  
2225 West 41st Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V6M 4L3  
(604) 261-3801

# Setting the Record Straight

**WRITERS BEWARE!** Time and again we find that members of the public who write to Ministers and government officials regarding farm animal abuse, receive replies so riddled with distortions that they amount to blatant misinformation. CETFA believes that salaried ministers and bureaucrats on the public payroll have a special responsibility to deal truthfully with their employers, the tax payers. Where serious inaccuracies occur, they must be challenged and corrected.

This newsletter includes a number of direct quotes from statements made by government officials in letters from the general public complaining about the abuse of animals raised for food. The writers have forwarded these letters to CETFA for comment.

Quotes are followed by the facts – clearly documented – and refuting perceived distortions from government sources. We urge all those who have been misinformed to write again, protesting the inaccuracies of replies received. Without a proper rebuttal the distortions will continue to block calls for reform in the treatment of farm animals – those most abused of creatures. Please write. One address will do: Office of The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Ottawa, ON K1A 0C5.

FEB. 4, 1999 FROM THE FEDERAL FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY:  
ANDRE GRAVEL

**QUOTE: "Regarding the allegations raised in the publications, the LAST RIDE and OPERATION TRANSPORT, the CFIA offered to meet with the alleged truck driver featured in the pamphlets in order to address his concerns, while maintaining his anonymity. CETFA refused."**

**RESPONSE:** This is completely untrue. The head office of CETFA was never contacted, nor was the trucker. There was no opportunity to refuse anything. CETFA wrote the Minister of Agriculture to inquire if the trucker would receive protection and complete anonymity if a meeting could be arranged. The answer was "no." (see CETFA files).

For nearly five years AG CAN has refused to issue the true facts of this matter while regularly using correspondence to promote its inaccuracies.

Given their unreliable track record, it is not likely CETFA would deliver a courageous trucker into such irresponsible hands.

FEB. 5, 1999 FROM THE OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE: STEVE DUNNIGAN, DEPARTMENTAL ASSISTANT.

**QUOTE: "The Department and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency work closely with producers and others to set standards for animal care and to ensure that modern farming and production methods are humane."**

**RESPONSE:** An internal government audit has itself uncovered concerns about the inhumane treatment of animals. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada reports showed inspection records were falsified to hide problems; inspectors did not know their own regulations; and animals were mistreated. (NATIONAL POST Feb. 6/99)

NOT DENIED.

*(continued on page 2)*

**QUOTE: "The Alberta Foundation For Animal Care, with the approval of the Canadian Cattleman's Association, has developed a "Cattle Handling and Hauling Training and Certification Program."**

RESPONSE: "Alberta Fares Worst. An internal review has given failing grades to meat-inspection programs across the country, including Alberta, the beef capital of Canada." (Stewart Bell, National Post Feb. 6, 1999).

**QUOTE: "Regulations made under the authority of the HEALTH of ANIMALS ACT prohibit the transportation of all animals under inhumane conditions, and state that carriers cannot load, transport, or unload animals in a way that would cause injury or undue suffering."**

RESPONSE: Federal Government statistics, documented annually, report the numbers of farm animals that arrived dead or severely injured at slaughter plants following transport by truck. Figures for 1998 show that more than three million animals (3,237,037) died as a result of illness or abuse en route to slaughter.

Reports to CETFA from a cross-Canada trucker over a period of more than two years, document in sickening detail the suffering endured by these animals in daily violation of legal Regulations. Budgetary cutbacks, staff reductions at all levels, and lack of political will has led to little or no enforcement.

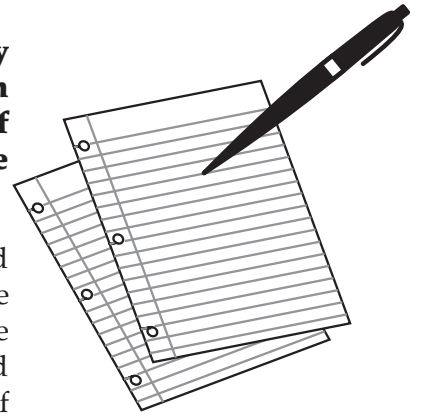
**QUOTE: "Regulations and operational policies under the MEAT INSPECTION ACT set standards for the humane handling and slaughter of food animals in federally registered abattoirs."**

RESPONSE: Multiple reports have produced clear documentation of appalling cruelties to all species of livestock presented at slaughter. These are routine, ranging from downed animals unable to walk following transport, being dragged to the kill floor for the pitiful few dollars gained over humane euthanasia. Again, such unspeakable acts of cruelty are in direct violation of the HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT, which is regularly ignored without penalty. (Contact CETFA for details, dates, location and statistics). In addition, inadequate stunning and bleeding out of conscious animals has been so frequently documented that these abuses seem acceptable to the industry and government.

**QUOTE: "The Canadian Food Inspection Agency also promotes standards for farm animal care that have been set out in RECOMMENDED CODES OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF FARM ANIMALS. These codes are drafted by producer organizations and coordinated by the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council."**

RESPONSE: Even with their minimal standards the Codes have no force in law, are purely voluntary, and are managed within the industry itself. The Expert Committee on Farm Animal Welfare and Behaviour, basically an extension of the agricultural bureaucracy, was presented with a draft survey on the impact of the Codes on the welfare of livestock. Of 727 responses, only 55% of producers were even aware of the existence of the Codes. Of these, only 46% had bothered to read the Codes. And 39% had never read the Codes that applied to their commodity. SUCH IS THE INFLUENCE OF THE VOLUNTARY CODES OF PRACTICE! However, we are told, "the Codes encourage producers and other animal handlers to adopt recognized standards," BUT NOT REQUIRED.

**QUOTE: "Provincial governments have the primary responsibility for the protection of animals, including their on-farm conditions. In most provinces, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals enforces provincial legislation for the humane treatment of animals."**



**RESPONSE:** NOT SO. Provincial SPCA's across the country have adopted legislation that omits protection for farm animals raised under intensive conditions. For example, the British Columbia Act reads that an offence "does not apply if the distress results from an activity which is carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of animal management." (Sec.14.2) While abuse of individual animals may be penalized, it does not apply to the wholesale handling of "factory"-raised animals, where ongoing cruelty is a recognized DAILY part of the agricultural system.

The manager of veterinary field services for Manitoba Agriculture, Dr. Allan Preston, was recently quoted as saying, "The act is as much there for your protection as it is the animals. It's also there for you and I (sic) in the livestock business to go about it without anybody getting in the way. We've gone to great lengths to provide outlines of accepted activities under the act." (Challenges of Production Seminar, Dauphin, Man. February '99).

**JULY 28, 1998 FEDERAL MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE: CATHY JO NOBLE, SPECIAL ASSISTANT.**

**QUOTE: "The CFIA's inspectors monitor the transportation of animals every day and take appropriate enforcement action in respect to violations, including those reported by the SPCA and others."**

**RESPONSE:** To update our records would you kindly advise me how many violations led to enforcement action, or to charges and convictions during the past three years?

**MARCH 4, 1998**

**QUOTE: "At federally inspected abattoirs, downed animals are humanely destroyed before they are removed from the truck, and if the circumstances so warrant, an investigation will be carried out."**

**RESPONSE:** THIS IS ABSOLUTELY UN-TRUE. Following the undercover filming by CETFA of the agony of a downer cow being dragged off the truck to slaughter, industry and government met to diffuse resulting publicity, and were forced to report that in Ontario alone, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food estimated that 700 downers a month were received in provincial plants, most of which were dealt with in the manner recorded in the CETFA video. Of these 90% pass inspection (i.e. have some salvage value) if the animal remains alive to be slaughtered on the regular line. [P.S. Shortly after this appalling revelation, the plant ceased operation and was closed down.]

Humane euthanasia on the trucks – although a regulation – is regularly flouted to avoid unscheduled delays and cleaning of vehicles. To declare otherwise is nothing less than shameful deceit.

The letter lists a number of achievements resulting from the Humane Transportation Review. These are further blatant distortions, apparently designed to misinform the public. Any such achievements would be reflected in greatly reduced numbers of animals Dead On Arrival. This has not happened.

Lastly, it is unacceptable to use the term "unnecessary suffering" as government and industry are prone to do. What do they consider "necessary"? Only "Avoidable suffering" shows credibility of intent.

# ANIMAL CARE ISSUES RAISED AT POULTRY CONFERENCE

BY JOAN LeBLANC

MONCTON, NB • "With the rapid urbanization of society and the lack of information available to the public concerning agricultural production, it is no wonder farmers have come under the microscope of public scrutiny," Jim Johnston, with the Ontario Farm Animal Council, said in his address on Animal Care Issues, at the recent Atlantic Poultry Conference in Moncton.

Johnston told a large number of producers that animal rights activists, who are generating problems within the industry, are a serious and rapidly growing problem. He said activists are especially concerned with agricultural practices that affect the environment and pose a threat to food safety, the increased use of biotechnology and, most importantly, the care and treatment of animals. He believes the activists draw their strength from the public's lack of knowledge concerning accepted practices, and the media's willingness to add hype to an otherwise unexceptional story.

"In many instances the media will blow a story well out of proportion, take issues out of context, in their quest to add sensationalism to an otherwise uneventful story," Johnston said, while citing a number of notable instances both in Canada and the United States as well as in Europe.

He said it is important to note the difference between animal welfare and animal rights. "Animal rights is not about larger cages or better pen designs, it is about empty cages." And that very fact impacts greatly on agriculture today.

"Animal welfare advocates seek to alleviate suffering by improving the conditions imposed on animals by humans. Further, they believe that we as humans have the right to use animals for justifiable human benefit but must do so in the most humane manner possible. Their ultimate goal is the responsible use of animals, with no pain or suffering."

On the other hand, Johnston said, animal rights activists maintain an ideology

that assumes there is a basic moral equality between humans and animals. They believe animals have the right not to be used for human benefit, regardless of the humaneness of that use. Their ultimate goal is the complete abolition of all animal use.

Increased public attention on the issues of caring for animals has served to increase the number of animal rights groups in North America, with many appearing to be little more than money making opportunities for their organizers. Johnston outlined the financial statistics of several well-known Canadian and American organizations, concluding that, in 1998 alone, the ten largest animal activist groups in the US had a combined income of \$129 million.

Johnston urged those in the agri-food sector to be aware of the animal rights issues and the effects they have on today's food production. "We spend a lot of time trying to produce food products, however we are guilty of not spending enough time explaining to the ordinary consumer just where food comes from and how it happens to end up on their tables. If we don't try to educate the public, we are eventually going to lose this battle of being able to keep animals."

Johnston believes that agri-food growers

should be concerned with the growth of the animal rights movement. Over the past few years many such groups have sprung up all over North America and Europe. There are more than 200 privately run groups currently in Canada alone. These groups are organized, well-financed and growing bigger every day, while their information concerning animal welfare is often misinformed, and regularly influences public opinion on animal issues through the media and the education system.

This misinformed information only serves to inflame public outrage on animal care and the environment and instill fears about food safety and the use of biotechnology in food production. This, he stated, leads to a lack of confidence in farmers and the food they supply.

Johnston urged producers to support agricultural awareness efforts through the donation of personal time or resources to ultimately get the true story of agricultural production out to the public. Make sure your own operation is in order and correct any problems that may cause undue concern. We have to stand up and tell our story, the real story, while we still can."

(Farm Focus, May 14, 1999)

**The third tragic fire to blacken P.E.I. This time it's cows. It was 1300 pigs in 1994, and 3500 pigs in 1997.**

## NOBRA DAIRY FARMS LOSES 200 CATTLE

BY BRIGIITE VAN VLIET

IRISHTOWN, PEI • A devastating fire destroyed 200 dairy cattle, a large three-section barn and milking equipment at Nobra Farm in Irishtown, PEI. Owners John and Piet Lauwerijssen estimated losses topping the \$1 million mark.

"The blaze was caused by a malfunctioning fan in the heifer section of the 29,000-sq. ft. barn," Piet noted. The fierce late-spring snowstorm on April 28 played havoc with the electrical power supply. The power went off and on, jamming and overheating the fan, which caused the fire!

The brothers, helped by friends and neighbours, managed to rescue 120 milk cows and 50 heifers and calves. Due to intense heat and smoke though, 80 cows and 120 young animals perished. The rescued young cattle were taken to nearby farms, while the milk cows are being housed in one local barn.

Weather conditions also hampered the firefighting efforts of the four departments,

responding to the alarm with 50 trucks, tankers and equipment. Working throughout the night and part of the following day, they remained on the scene, only to be called later to dampen smoldering rubble. Even though intense heat melted the siding of the farm home, firefighters managed to save the structure, located within 30 feet of the burning barn.

"It was a night we'll never forget," said Piet, who will be married in June. "We thought we were down and out, but overwhelming community support has put us in a more positive mood and looking up again!"

Insurance will cover rebuilding the barn and buying new equipment. But it will take at least two to three years to rebuild the Nobra dairy herd again, the young farmer said.

A community benefit dance for the Lauwerijssen brothers netted a sizable amount of money and a fire fund has been set up at the Scotia Bank in Kensington.

(Farm Focus, May 26, 1999)

***It could be life-threatening to visit the Island!***

We honour the memory of  
**Margaret Gurd,**  
for many years a Director of the  
CSPCA in Montreal, and who,  
to the end, showed her unflinching  
compassion for the sufferings  
of the animal world.  
For all her caring we thank  
and salute her.