



Enforcement view: The rules for now and for the future

If you haul livestock, you're bound to run into a Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspector sooner or later. That is because CFIA is tasked with enforcing the regulations that govern transport of animals in Canada.

So it's important to know the facts about the rules you have to follow.

As soon as you load animals, you have to follow the federal "Health of Animals Regulations" – regardless of whether you only do local runs or truck livestock across the country.

If you follow "good industry practice" as described in the Canadian "recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals – Transportation," it is unlikely that you are contravening federal regulations.

Accidents occur and shortcuts are sometimes taken; but generally Canadian livestock haulers do a good job. CFIA inspection reports from across the country show that 90 per cent and more of inspected livestock transports deliver the animals in apparent comfort and good condition.

Expect to see CFIA inspectors most concerned when drivers have loaded livestock that are unfit to be transported or when a truck contains more animals than it can hold. Drivers have the right – and the obligation – to refuse to load an animal that they feel is not compatible with the rest of the load, is not going to survive the trip, or has an injury such as a broken leg which will cause the animal to suffer and the driver to experience problems down the road.

Drivers are obliged to refuse to overcrowd their truck. Axle weights are of little help when it comes to getting the loading density right – you can have legal axle weights and still be carrying too many animals in your vehicle.

The Canadian federal regulations on animal transport are currently being updated. The regulations are approximately 30 years old. We now know much more about the science behind animals in transit, how their

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Special guest column from the CFIA

bodies react to water deprivation, the stress of loading and unloading, the vibration of the vehicle and so forth. What industry uses as good practices and the rolling stock available to truckers have also changed – the trucks that hauled livestock when the regulations first came out have been retired to truck museums long ago.

So, what can we expect in terms of future regulatory changes?

In short, clearer definitions, improved practicality and updated practices.

Here are a few examples for each of these categories:

Precise definitions:

Terms such as "adequate," "unlikely to cause," and "properly designed" lead to confusion. We look to eliminate and replace them with more practical descriptions, wherever possible.

The definition "overcrowding" needs to be clarified by adding loading density guides to the regulations.

Practicality – making well informed decisions:

A term such as "unfit for transport" is easier to understand with examples. Conditions such as the following make an animal unfit to be transported:

- Fractured limbs, pelvis or other fractures that considerably hamper mobility or are likely to cause severe pain when the animal is manipulated for loading or when it is being transported.
- A low body condition score indicating emaciation and weakness
- A lameness score indicating the animal's inability to walk or stand
- Uterine prolapse (protruding uterus)
- A hernia (large lump on the



HOW YOU DOING IN THERE?: CFIA inspection officers inspect a load of livestock. Changes in the regulations are just around the corner, they warn.

belly) that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Impedes movement
- Is painful on palpation
- Touches the ground when the animal is standing in its natural position
- Has an open skin wound, ulceration or obvious infection.

Updated practices:

In light of what we know about animals today, some of the old practices can no longer be defended.

For 30 years it has been legal to withhold feed from ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats) for 81 hours and water for 57 hours. Forcing livestock to go without feed and water for such long periods of time is simply unacceptable by today's standards. In the case of ruminants, it would make more sense to keep them confined in a truck for no longer than 36 hours before feeding, watering and resting them.

The regulations need to reflect reality and the concerns of Canadians about humane treatment of animals. Treating animals humanely during transport is a shared responsibility of everyone involved in the

process.

Employers need knowledgeable, experienced drivers; therefore they need to train their staff and plan ahead for emergencies. It is not the trucker alone that is responsible when unfit animals are loaded; the shipper must send only fit animals on the trip.

CFIA wants to make the updated regulations as effective as possible. Watch for an outline of the proposed changes on the CFIA Web site towards late summer this year. You will have an opportunity to provide your own comments at that time.

Please participate – it is in your interest and the interest of your business! □

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