



Hogs, horses and hens...

More than just cattle ride the roads

By James Menzies

CALGARY, Alta. – You'll find a lot more than just cattle behind the slats of the livestock trailers riding Canadian highways. Horses, pigs, chickens and even sheep are regularly trucked from region to region both within Canada and across the border.

And each species brings its own unique challenges to the folks who pilot these vehicles and are in charge of the animals' safety en route.

Hogs...

In Manitoba, pigs outnumber the human population substantially. In a province of just over one million people, there are seven million hogs produced each year. Only about 2.5 million are slaughtered in Manitoba, so unlike other pig-producing provinces such as Ontario and Quebec, long-distance transportation is a major part of the business.

Manitoba Agriculture's Dr. Terry Whiting said there is increasing public pressure on the industry to ensure hogs are being transported in a humane manner. He said the public perception is that 20 per cent of animal suffering can be attributed to transportation. Meanwhile, the transportation of hogs represents just one per cent of the total cost of production.

"We can improve transportation really, really cheaply," Whiting said. And he is urging the industry to do so. The province tracks the number of hogs that are dead on arrival when reaching the processing plants and according to Whiting "That information is available to the public for scrutinizing."

At a recent livestock trucking workshop, Whiting referred to the "moralization" of humane transportation issues. He said there's room for improvement among the province's hog haulers, and the pressure to improve trucking practices has never been greater.



WRAPPED UP: Tarping chicken loads is now routine, but they don't always get the best airflow and ventilation during the summer and winter. A new prototype trailer in Saskatchewan may help fix this problem.

"Animals suffering for human profit is a sin – not only bad business," he said.

Whiting said some of the problems involving hog haulers include overcrowding, the use of equipment not intended for hog hauling and Just-in-Time delivery demands.

Some people continue to use grain trailers to haul hogs even though "the suspensions on those trucks are unmerciful," he said.

Whiting went so far as to discourage the use of dual-use trailers (those that can be converted from catteliner to hog trailers), even though he admitted they're still widely used in the province.

Whiting said the animal rights movement is as much about the behaviour of people as it is about the health of animals and emphasized the importance of upping the standards across the industry.

Horses...

The number of horses being trucked into Canada from the U.S. is on the rise. And that's why the U.S. is stepping up enforcement efforts to ensure these animals are being shipped humanely, said Timothy Cordes,

senior staff veterinarian for equine programs with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Meanwhile, Canada has responded with its own rule which "dovetails nicely" with the U.S. regulations, he said.

Each year, about 20,000 U.S. horses are shipped to Canada for slaughter. While the truck trip may be one of the last stages of their lives, it doesn't mean the horses should be treated inhumanely en-route, Cordes said.

"If a horse has got to go to slaughter, it has to get there in a safe and humane way, it's as simple as that," he said.

One of the changes to slaughter horse transport regulations is the phasing out of two-tiered shipping. As of December 2006, it will be illegal to haul horses in two-tiered trailers. Another relatively new rule is that horses must be fed and watered six hours prior to the journey.

The U.S. has also introduced an Owner/Shipper certificate which Cordes said "acts as a trace back mechanism to find those who chose to violate the laws."

Doing so is costly – with fines of

\$5,000 per violation. And when a trucker or shipper is charged, it's rarely just for one offence, Cordes said.

"There are rarely less than three offences in each case," he said, adding the \$5,000 applies to each and every offence. "It adds up very, very quickly."

In 2004, there were 46 charges laid under the new rules. Eight-one per cent of them were for technical violations such as failure to provide the proper paperwork. The other 19 per cent involved humane transportation violations.

Here in Canada, the CFIA has signed a letter of intent, promising to acknowledge the U.S. rules. Canadian officials will also verify the information on the U.S. owner/shipper certificates and report violators to the U.S.

And hens

On the poultry front, providing the right amount of ventilation is a delicate balancing act – especially in hot or cold weather. The Canadian Prairies are one of the coldest regions in the world that sustain a commercial poultry industry, so transporting the birds isn't always easy.

That's why the University of Saskatchewan has developed a one-of-a-kind trailer that is heated and actively ventilated. The prototype trailer is now being tested in the field, said Dr. Henry Classen, professor of the Poultry Management and Nutrition Department.

The project involves a 53' trailer as well as a B-train, which have proven to maintain uniform temperatures within the trailer with lower humidity values. So far, testing has resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in dead-on-arrivals, Classen said.

Traditionally, gaps in the tarps allowed air to flow into the trailer, jeopardizing the health of the birds. The new prototypes take the existing airflow, heat it to an appropriate temperature and distribute it more evenly to ensure birds are able to travel safely, he explained. Testing on the new trailers is ongoing. □

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