

# Animal Welfare Linked to Food Safety

A 2004 independent review, aimed at developing a strategy for meat safety in Ontario, focused significant attention on animal welfare issues, including at least seven recommendations to improve livestock care.

Judge Roland Haines was commissioned to conduct the review—*Report of the Meat Regulatory and Inspection Review* “to strengthen public health and safety and business confidence.” Judge Haines recognized that the link between animal welfare and food safety is not always clear but, “there is evidence that suggests that malnourished and unduly stressed animals are more susceptible to disease and a substantial portion of condemned livestock are animals that have been subjected to inhumane treatment.”

Non-ambulatory animals were of particular concern. Proper handling by trained personnel; humane euthanasia and on-farm disposal options were recommended. Judge Haines advised that, “research be urgently carried out into the feasibility of regulated on-farm slaughter of non-ambulatory animals in Ontario.”

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Judge Haines recognized that proper training is key to humane animal care. Training programs were recommended for:

- Producers – on handling non-ambulatory animals, on-farm euthanasia and on-farm disposal of deadstock
- Transporters – on the handling of animals in transit
- Abattoir personnel – on humane animal handling and slaughter

*The Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals* were recognized as an educational tool, but “since these programs are voluntary, there is no way to verify that farmers or workers are receiving or implementing the training.”

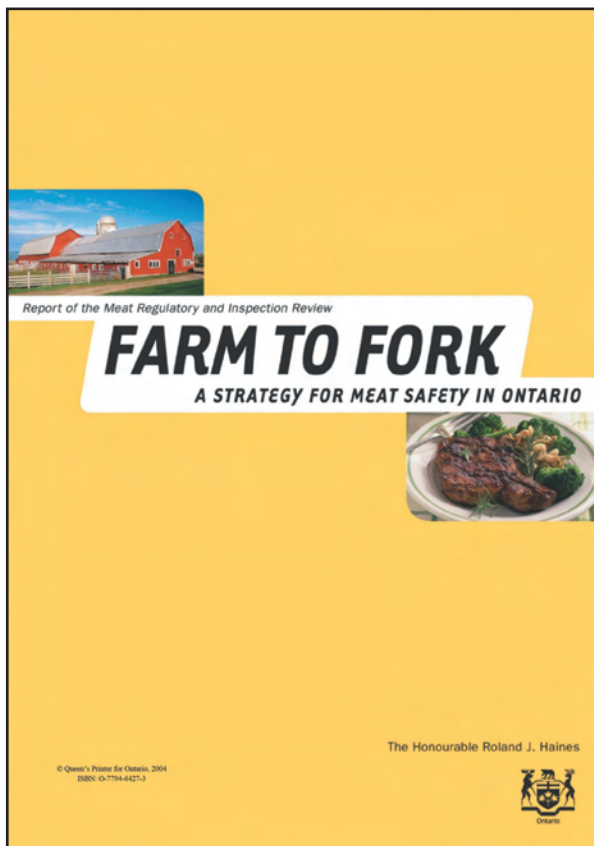
However, on-farm food safety programs were noted as a good fit for animal welfare standards and the Codes:

*“In order to maximize producers’ ability to respond to market requirements as well as food safety requirements, some flexibility in the OFFS programs to incorporate animal welfare concerns and standards, as well as auditing capacity, will be important to avoid duplication and conflicting standards... Good production practices for animal welfare, handling and transportation should be included as part of the OFFS programs.”*

Similar conclusions were made in the 2002 discussion paper, *Animal Welfare Verification in Canada*:

*“The Codes of Practice can and should serve as the backbone of the best management practices guidelines in the development of complete, auditable animal welfare verification programs... The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Program should be utilized as the vehicle to implement auditable third-party animal welfare standards.”*

Gwen McBride, of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, says, “The Ontario government intends to follow-up on all of Judge Haines’ recommendations. With respect to animal welfare, we intend to build upon existing relationships. A government/industry partnership will move animal welfare initiatives forward in Ontario.” ■



AFAC - [afac.ab.ca/reports/verification.htm](http://afac.ab.ca/reports/verification.htm)

Haines Report - [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/meatinspectionreport/](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/pubs/meatinspectionreport/)