



www.afac.ab.ca
Email: info@afac.ab.ca



Calico Beef Consulting

Special Report

Date: June 4, 2003

Client: Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association

Topic: Determining standard procedure for commercial trucking companies handling a mechanical breakdown of a loaded hog unit

OVERVIEW

Mechanical failure of a loaded commercial livestock transport unit is relatively rare but when it does occur, a considerable amount of economic value is placed in jeopardy. Equally as important, the well being of the many animals on board depends on the decisions that the driver, dispatch and owner/agent make when dealing with a delayed unit.

Such a case was brought to the attention of the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) Association. In early March, 2003 a loaded semi-trailer commercial hog transport unit originating in Manitoba suffered transmission trouble and was forced to stop in Saskatoon for repairs. The trailer load of animals was disconnected and the tractor was rolled into an available shop and repaired. Approximately four hours later the tractor was reconnected to the trailer and sent on its way (destination central Alberta).

In the meantime the trucking company dispatched another tractor to take the delayed load. A decision was made later to allow the repairs to take place rather than allow the second unit to continue to Saskatoon. In their opinion the second tractor unit would not arrive in Saskatoon before the repairs could be made, so the company ordered the second unit to return to base.

One animal died enroute and another died a few days later. The Alberta hog owner/receiver did not consider this death loss, nor the procedure itself, to be alarming but was interested in pursuing the matter.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The Alberta owner/receiver of the hogs requested AFAC perform an informal inquiry into the protocol utilized by commercial transporters to deal with an emergency breakdown such as the one described here. The main purpose was to identify strengths and weaknesses of existing protocols and decide whether an update or formal addendum to an existing Code of Practice would be appropriate.

INQUIRY METHOD

Three major commercial livestock transport companies specializing in hogs were polled about their protocols regarding a situation such as the one described here. Two of the companies are based in Manitoba and one is in southern Alberta. All are recognized as industry leaders.

The *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Farm Animals – Pigs* were referenced, as was the new *Transportation Code* issued in 2002. In addition, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's *Humane Transport Course* was thoroughly perused for relevant material.

The information presented here represents a compilation of industry protocol in place today on the practical level.

THE HOG TRANSPORT COMPANIES

Three companies that represent the best of the commercial hog transport sector in North America were asked to explain their protocol in the following situation:

Q. One of your units loaded with hogs experiences mechanical failure enroute to the final destination. What do you do?

Company 1 (Manitoba based, Canada and US routes, 28 units)

A. *We would determine how long the repair will take. If it will be any longer than two hours we will either send one of our own tractors out to get the load or lease a nearby tractor from a known company to retrieve it.*

Company 2 (Alberta based, Canada and US routes, 34 units)

A. *We would either send one of our trucks out to get the load or, if it is too far from our Alberta headquarters, we would try to find a lease operator in the area that would take it to its final destination. If we have a cattle truck that is in the vicinity of the breakdown we will offload the cattle at a feedlot or auction market nearby, drop the empty trailer and go pick up the hog load. The delayed truck can then take the cattle once the repairs are made.*

Company 3 (Manitoba based, Canadian routes, 20 units)

A. *If the problem is with the tractor and the repairs can be made quickly, we will turn the trailer into the wind (to maximize airflow) and drop it off outside the shop. We would never take a load of hogs into the shop because they need airflow. We would also try to get another tractor in to take the load if the repairs cannot be made quickly.*

The Animals Are ‘Top Priority’

All three companies were adamant that the hogs were the top priority and they would go to any lengths to ensure that their comfort and safety were taken care of first. They also noted specialty components of some of their trailers such as on-board sprinklers that can be hooked direct to any garden hose outlet.

EXAMINING EXISTING MATERIAL

CFIA Humane Transport Course

The CFIA Humane Transportation Course had nothing specific to hog transport emergency situations.

2001 Recommended Code of Practice – Transport

The *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Farm Animals – Transportation* makes a reference (in Appendix 3, page 46) to Emergency Procedures — Transportation (specifically an accident enroute), but does not include any specific reference to protocol enacted due to vehicle breakdown.

References to the care of animals during accidents or delays are noted in;

Section 1, page 2, Introduction

Duration of Transport Factors that must be researched considered and addressed include emergency procedures should problems be encountered, possible off loading sites along the route in the event of problems, expected delays such as repairs.

Section 2, page 3, General Considerations

2.1.6 (g) (shippers are responsible for) providing a method for the driver to contact them in the event of an emergency if not accompanying the load.

Section 5, page 9, Care and Protection During Transport

Table 3 – Signs of animal discomfort during transport are listed here (how to recognize overcrowding, overheating, cold exposure).

Table 4 – Recommended Maximum Transport Times & Minimum Feed, Water & Rest Times listed here gives the transporter an idea of how long the animals can safely remain on board.

5.5.9 – Slaughter animals imported from the United States cannot be unloaded in Canada for feed, water and rest.

Section 8, page 22, Species Specific and Class Specific Considerations

8.6.29 (Pigs) – In case of breakdowns, accidents or other delays, follow the emergency procedures (Appendix 3).

***Recommended Code of Practice for the Care & Handling of Farm Animals – Pigs
(Publication 1898/E printed in 1993)***

Page 38, Care Of Pigs In Transit

In case of breakdowns, accidents, or other delays, take whatever action is necessary to ensure the well-being of the pigs. Emergency procedures are listed in Appendix 6.

Appendix 6 , page 52, – Emergency Procedures (Transportation)

Emergency procedures to be followed by drivers in the event of a breakdown, accident, or any other delay during transit.

Please post in trucks

1. Telephone home office immediately.
2. During business hours, telephone the nearest abattoir, assembly yard and/or the manager of the receiving plant.
3. Telephone the packing plant. (Attach night telephone numbers.)
4. If necessary, arrange for the use of another vehicle to move the load to a sheltered area or to the plant.
5. During extremely hot or cold weather, seek shelter for the load until the emergency situation is over.
6. Seek the advice of a veterinarian in the event of distressed or seriously injured pigs.

Do something! Use common sense. The comfort of the animals must be kept in mind at all times.

SUMMARY:

It is apparent that the transport companies seem to have developed their own standards completely independent of industry. These standards, however, closely reflect those recommended by industry.

A protocol for vehicle delay due to mechanical failure does exist in the *Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Pigs* (Publication 1898/E). It can be referenced on page 52, Appendix 6 (see above).

The transport companies polled claimed they did NOT reference this, or any other, code book to develop their in-house protocols.

The transport companies polled, however, did utilize many of the points laid out in the above AAFC Code (Publication 1898/E, Appendix 6 – Emergency Procedures transportation) plus a few of their own not listed.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT**Revision Of Codes**

It is the recommendation of this report that the *Recommended Code of Practice – Pigs* needs very little revision to reflect the standard industry emergency procedures for delays due to mechanical breakdown.

It is a further recommendation of this report that the *Recommended Code of Practice – Transportation*, Appendix 3, page 46 – Emergency Procedures, Transportation; be revised to include industry standard practice for emergency protocol due to mechanical or any other delay.

It is a further recommendation of this report to inquire into the reason why commercial transporters were left to develop the emergency protocol on their own when the AAFC Code – Publication 1898/E was readily available.

Report prepared for AFAC by Tim O’Byrne, April, 2003