

Alberta 4-H LAW

Learning about Animal Welfare

Roll Call

Name some concerns the public may have about the welfare of your project animal.

The Care of Our Animals

4-H members who take care of animals show care for these creatures by providing food, water, shelter, and health care. Making sure that the animals are also free from undo pain and suffering also shows care. If we want to be part of the livestock industry, we need to take good care of our animals.



The Five Freedoms . . .

Livestock producers are responsible for providing our livestock with five basic freedoms.

- 1 Freedom from **thirst, hunger and malnutrition** by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
- 2 Freedom from **discomfort** by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3 Freedom from **pain, injury and disease** by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4 Freedom to **express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
- 5 Freedom from **fear and distress** by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.





Activity 1

In the back of your record book you are required to understand and follow “The Creed of the 4-H Stockkeeper.” Let’s examine that creed in relation to the welfare of your 4-H project animal and match each of the commitments to one or more of the Five Freedoms.

The Creed of the 4-H Stockkeeper

I will:

- **Provide comfortable and sufficient quarters for my livestock.** I will house my animal with enough space to prevent crowding and fighting. When I tie my animal, I will make sure the rope is not too tight and that there is nothing nearby that can harm the animal. This also means that I will help to prevent my animal from being too hot or too cold both at home or during transport.
- **Strive to improve the breeding and quality of my livestock, and the livestock in my community, from year to year.** The more structurally sound, efficient and productive our animals are, the less stress will be placed on them.
- **Keep my animals free from parasites.** Keeping animals free of disease is very important to their well-being. By keeping the animals bedding fresh and clean and ensuring that the eating area of the animal is sanitary I can help protect the health of my animal. This also requires giving vaccinations and medications as required by the animal.
- **Strive to keep my livestock in good health.** To ensure the good health of my project animal, I will observe it carefully every day, to see that it is eating and behaving normally. If my animal appears unhealthy, I will see that it receives immediate attention and will keep accurate and complete records of any health problems that occur. I will never subject my animal to undue suffering.
- **Feed my livestock on time each day.** I will make sure that I can financially afford to feed my animal the right amount and the right kind of feed every day on a regular schedule. This will provide the nutrition my animal needs and ensure the daily comfort of my animal.
- **Learn as much as possible about the best methods of feeding and caring for livestock.** By learning about different methods of raising livestock, my animals will benefit from new strategies that help to ensure that my animals receive the best possible care. I can explore new animal husbandry ideas through reading, asking questions, attending workshops and participating in 4-H activities.
- **Be kind to animals.** I will not take my frustrations out on animals. I will be patient while training my animal. I will never physically abuse my animal and I will only use low-stress handling methods and tools (ie. paddles).
- **Provide my animals with clean water at all times.** All animals need water to survive. Every day I will check that the water supply for my animal is clean, free of ice, easily accessible and working properly.

- **Always be a good sport in competition.** Livestock shows, including Achievement Days, are one way that the public can see how important proper care of our animals is to us. Good manners and a courteous disposition go a long way in presenting a good impression to the public.
- **Keep an accurate record of my projects.** Keeping accurate records will ensure my animal is maintaining proper health, growth and development. Complete and accurate records of vaccinations and treatments to help maintain on-farm food safety.
- **Complete my project and take part in all the activities of my 4-H club each year. 4-H is a place of learning.** By taking part in all the activities and completing the project each year, I am allowing myself to learn and experience all that I can about my project. This will help me to improve my understanding of animals and my methods of caring for them.

Activity 2



Check the things that you are already doing well to care for your animal. Check which ones you can improve on.

I'm Already Doing	I Want to Improve	Care
		Prepare facilities before I get my animal.
		Provide adequate housing and bedding.
		Feed my animal daily and on a regular schedule.
		Feed a balanced ration.
		Provide access to good quality water at all times.
		Control internal and external parasites.
		Any invasive procedures (e.g. castration, dehorning, docking) are performed when animals are as young as possible.
		Train animals to lead or be handled at a young age.
		Have a planned health program to prevent disease.
		Observe animals daily and get treatment for those needing it.
		Aware of the signs that my animal is in pain or suffering.
		Keep feed and treatment records.
		Be aware of animal comfort (physical and mental) at all stages of production.
		Minimize or eliminate all procedures or circumstances that may cause stress to my animal.
		Take the time to understand the behavioral needs (e.g. companionship) of my animal.
		Sort and load animals safely and with concern for them.



Activity 3

Are you paying attention to the factors that affect the welfare of animals? Check each of the Five Freedoms you provide you animals and complete the sentence with how you provide each of them.

____1 Freedom from **thirst, hunger and malnutrition** by:

____2 Freedom from **discomfort** by:

____3 Freedom from **pain, injury and disease** by:

____4 Freedom to **express normal behavior** by:

____5 Freedom from **fear and distress** by:

Animal Welfare Issues

What are they and where do they come from?

Most people eat meat, milk and eggs as part of their daily diet. While the general public has a positive opinion about Canadian farmers and ranchers, we must not take this fact for granted. The number of people choosing not to eat animal-based products like meat, milk and eggs, is on the rise.

People make this choice for various reasons. Some do not agree with using livestock for food because they are concerned about how farm animals are treated and cared for. Some people will have this opinion even though they may have little or no direct experience with livestock production. Their views can be greatly affected by the widespread television and newspaper coverage given to those unfortunate cases when farm animals have in fact been mistreated or neglected.

Different backgrounds and experiences are where animal welfare issues come from. There are two main ways of thinking.

Animal “**welfare**” is the proper care of animals. Most livestock owners are strong supporters of this idea because animals raised with their well-being in mind is the right thing to do. They also understand that there is an economical value to welfare, as the animals will be most productive and profitable when they are well cared for. Low stress handling and humane care will help to ensure that we produce high quality products that are safe to eat.

Animal **rights** is the belief that all animals have the same rights as people. Animal rights activists believe that all animal use, including pet ownership is wrong. They are opposed to animals used in livestock production and entertainment (rodeo), sport hunting and trapping, and science and research. Although animal rights activists, in some cases, raise legitimate concerns that have resulted in improved animal welfare, their real motive is eliminate all animal use by humans. Some animal rights groups, including PETA, condone and fund vandalism and violence directed at animal users. Their mission is not improvement, but no animal use.

Examples of animal rights groups:

- PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)
- ALF (Animal Liberation Front)
- Animal Alliance

The terminology **Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and Humane Society** are often interchangeable. In most cases, these groups represent ‘traditional’ animal welfare advocates. They believe in the humane treatment of all animals. They often run ‘shelters’ or are involved in animal protection enforcement. In Alberta, the ASPCA is responsible for the enforcement of the Alberta Animal Protection Act. They investigate all cases of animal abuse or neglect. Unfortunately, some animal rights groups will borrow these names to establish instant credibility with the public.

It is important to know that as livestock producers, we **do not** debate the **rights** of animals. Experience raising animals place our views in the interests of an animals’ well-being, not an animal’s rights. Therefore, we **do promote the welfare** and proper care of the animals we are responsible for.

Most people in Canada live in cities. Often these people do not have contact with farmers/ranchers or understand what farming/ranching is all about. For this reason, livestock competitions and exhibits are a useful way to show people how we care for our animals.

What do I say if I am asked about these issues?

When someone asks questions, remember:

- Always be polite. Never consider a question stupid or silly.
- If you do not know the answer, say “I don’t know” and seek the help of a senior member or your leader.
- Tell them how you care for your animals. Let them know what you do to make sure your animal is happy and comfortable
- The take home message should simply be - “My animals are important to me so I care for them.”



Activity 4

List three questions you think a non-agricultural person may ask you about your project animal, then answer the questions.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Let's Review the Issue

Let's Review the Issue

Complete each statement below, using each of the following words only once.

animal rightist
 health
 well-being
 animal welfare
 humanely
 cruel
 growth

- 1 Some people do not support livestock production because they feel raising animals is _____.
- 2 An _____ seeks to eliminate the use of animals in food production, clothing, research and entertainment.
- 3 Most livestock owners support the idea that people depend on animals and using animals is acceptable as long as the animals are well cared for. This is the understanding of _____.
- 4 The food provided through livestock production is _____ produced when the Five Freedoms are provided.
- 5 We benefit most when we raise our animals with concern for their _____.
- 6 Keeping careful records of my animal can help me keep track of its _____ and _____.

Responsibility

Part of practicing good animal welfare is not just looking out for the animals in our care, but looking out for the welfare of all animals. When we see animals that are not having their needs met or that are subjected to abuse and/or neglect it is our responsibility to make sure the animals receive the proper care they need. Alberta Farm Animal Care has established a hot line you can call to report any cases of animal neglect or abuse, or when you feel you cannot meet the needs of your animals. The ALERT line was established to allow producers to help producers ensure responsible animal care. **1-800-506-CARE (2273)**.

Thank You to Our Sponsor

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In 1993, Alberta's major livestock groups formed the **Alberta Farm Animal Care Association**. AFAC's goal is to improve animal handling and promote responsible animal care. As part of their mandate, AFAC engages in discussion with the public about today's livestock production; monitors and participates in issues and legislation that affect animal care and encourage research relevant to animal care.