

# Alberta 4-H LAW

## Learning about Animal Welfare

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### Roll Call

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

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### The Welfare of Our Animals

Alberta farmers and ranchers raise animals for human use. As livestock producers, we are morally and legally responsible to care for our animals. Not only must we provide them with appropriate food and shelter, but we must also ensure our animals are not subjected to unnecessary pain and suffering or excessive stress. Livestock producers are responsible for the well-being of the animals in their care and should not tolerate animal neglect or abuse. As livestock producers we take pride in the fact that we believe in animal welfare because it is the right thing to do and we chose to do it. It is good for the animals, good for the producer and good for the industry. It is not just because it's the law or the public tells us we have to.

#### The Five Freedoms . . .

As livestock producers we have the responsibility of providing our livestock with these five 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 behavior** 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.

As the owner of a 4-H project animal involved in livestock production, you take on many important responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

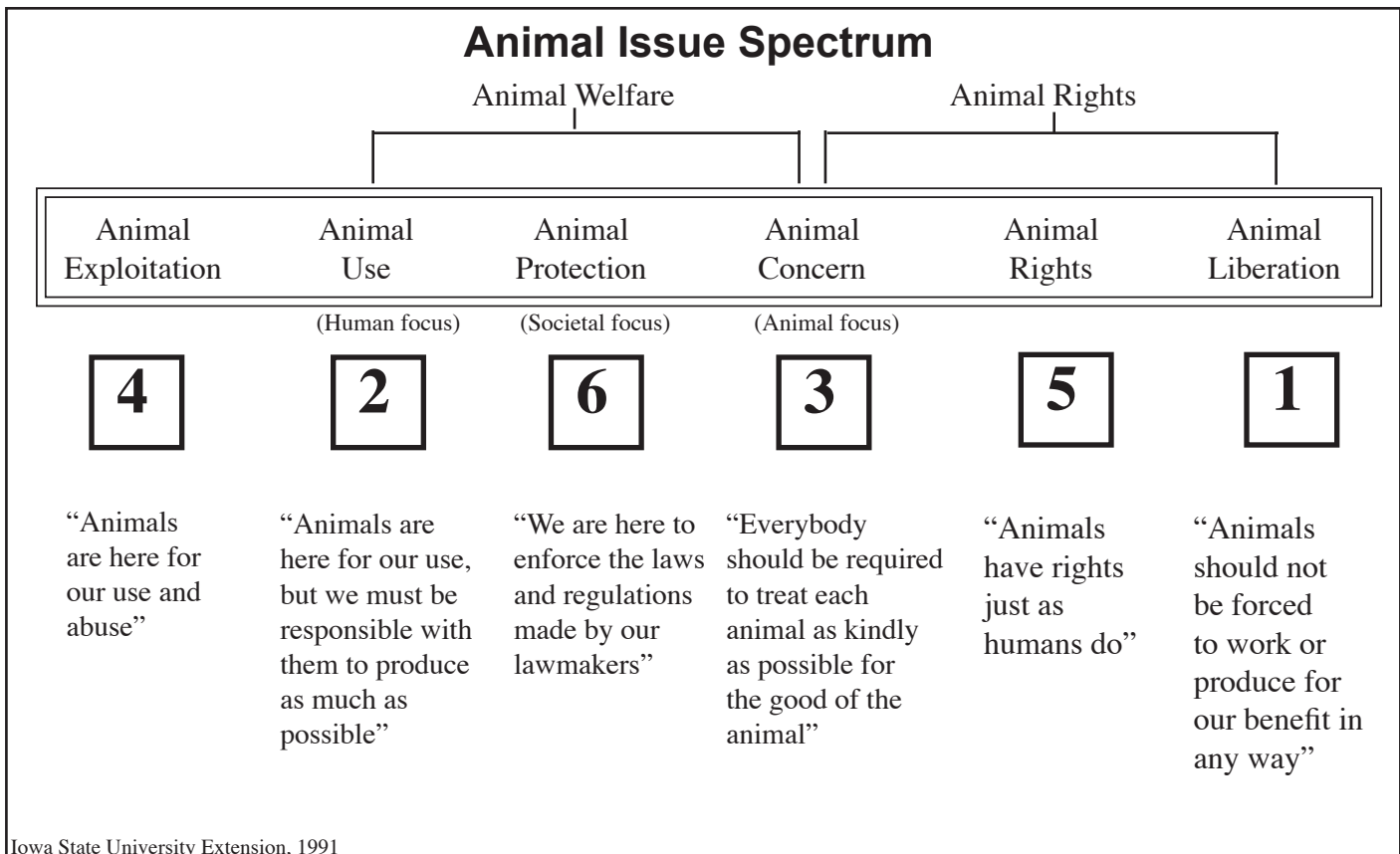
- 1 Ensuring that you abide by the “Five Freedoms” and the “Creed of the 4-H Stockkeeper” at all times.
- 2 You need to understand the issues around animal welfare and animal rights. Recognize that the public has varying perceptions of livestock production and the ways we interact with animals
- 3 Being prepared to respond to these concerns and express your views on welfare issues with supporting facts.

By now you should have learned the first two responsibilities by completing LAW Level 1 and Level 2. In this level we will challenge you to speak out on these issues.

## Let’s Review the Issues

Think for a moment about how our standard of living and our views on human rights have changed. Our views on slavery, the roles of women, and people with disabilities are a few examples of how our views have evolved through experiences and learning. What we have learned through research on animal welfare has allowed us to continually improve our animal husbandry practices. Through on-going research, we will continue to improve our practices.

The animal activist movement is based on a range of ideas of what our relationship with animals should be. Different people have different views. The views can range from extremes on either end to a more moderate middle of the road approach.



Iowa State University Extension, 1991

The Animal Issue Spectrum chart shows the wide range of ideas represented on this issue. The views on this issue are constantly shifting as people often waver across the various categories described. Some people who consider themselves “welfarists,” may actually be more supportive of the liberation of animals. Though this is not a definitive chart, it is a useful way to visualize the variety of views that people may have.

Some of the animal welfare issues develop because people do not understand livestock production. While others arise from practices we may need to improve on. Since the majority of the population resides in the city, they rely on the media and special interest groups to “educate” them on issues they may be not familiar with - such as livestock production practices. Unfortunately, these sources of information rarely provide an accurate or positive picture of our industry. The media will often grab onto an incident of animal abuse and splash it all over the screen and in print, leaving the general public with only negative images of our industry. They choose not to show the positive aspects of the industry, because it lacks the sensationalism of a negative story.

Extreme special interest groups, such as animal rights activists, have an agenda and they will do everything they can to further their agenda. They are often passionate about their “cause” and will use all means possible to enlist the support of as many people as they can. With so few people being raised in rural settings, there is not the background or knowledge to question or doubt what the activists are telling them. These groups often target the emotions of people by showing them photos or video of cases of animal abuse, and rely very little on presenting factual information.

Agriculture has a positive story to tell and it is up to us to tell it. No one knows more about the livestock industry than we as producers do. We need to spread the message that not only are our products inexpensive and safe, but they are produced with concern for the well-being of our animals! As a 4-H member you can play an important role in creating a greater understanding of how this industry works.

The primary goal of speaking with the public is to promote the understanding of livestock production. An important part of understanding is ensuring that our views, and those of the public, are based on fact. This requires knowing how and where to find facts and how to interpret the truth.

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## Evaluating Opinions

**A growing part of our population does not think really hard about issues.** People tend to believe everything they read in a newspaper or see on television. As long as it **sounds** interesting and believable they take it as fact, whether it is or not!

Many opinions are accepted as fact by people because they have been so widely expressed in the media. It is important to be able to decide whether someone is sharing their emotions, an opinion or a fact. Some things to watch out for are:

- **Statements with high emotional and low intellectual appeal** grab peoples’ emotions, their instinctive responses, rather than their intellectual reasoning. For instance, when people say, “livestock production is cruel” one should look closely at what they’re saying. They’re probably trying to grab onto the emotions. This shuts down our reasoning process which could expose a false claim with closer examination.

- **Messages repeated over and over.** If they are said enough times, people become comfortable with them and start to believe. When one hears something repeated over and over as a blanket statement without any particular proof, it is likely aimed at hitting people's emotions rather than providing fact.
- Words such as “**should**” or “**good**” are value judgments that are often used in statements **aimed at emotions rather than providing fact.**
- Opinions also often contain broad generalizations that are inaccurate and unfair. **Statements that aren't directed at you, specifically, but are directed at “people like you”** (such as farmers and ranchers in general) **are most likely emotional opinions.**
- **Dr. Jeff Goodwin** of the University of Idaho has written a paper entitled *Innovative Approaches to Address Controversial Issues*, where he examines the ways to present messages. He promotes the use of two-sided versus one-sided messages.

He asks which is more believable in the eyes of the general public: someone presenting a one-sided and generally rosy picture or someone who is open and sincere in showing the whole issue so that the public can analyze the information and reach their own conclusions.

He cites research indicating that two-sided messages are, as a rule, more effective than one-sided messages. He anticipates that the end result of a two-sided message will be a broadened perspective, though personal biases may still exist. A copy of this paper can be accessed at [www.afac.ab.ca/education.htm](http://www.afac.ab.ca/education.htm).



## Activity 1

### The Message

Read the following article that appeared in the April 5, 2004 issue of *The Minnesota Daily*. Then answer the questions at the end of the article. Be prepared to discuss this article with other club members.

#### *Animal rights and the myth of “humane” treatment*

*By Tom Regan, Guest Columnist*

*To outsiders, animal rights advocates look to be a strange lot. We don't eat meat, avoid cosmetics tested on animals and boycott the Ringling Brothers Circus. Drape ourselves in fur? Forget it. Animal rights advocates don't even wear leather or wool.*

*Many people view advocates as certifiable, grade-A, top-of-the-class nutcases. Reduced to the essentials, however, what we believe is just common sense.*

*We believe the animals killed for food, trapped for fur, used in laboratories or trained to jump through hoops are unique somebodies - not generic somethings. What happens to them matters to them. What happens to them makes a difference to the quality and duration of their lives.*

*In these respects, animal rights advocates believe humans and these animals are the same - equal. And so it is that all advocates share a common moral outlook: We should not do to them what we would not have done to us. Not eat them. Not wear them. Not experiment on them. Not train them to jump through hoops. "Not larger cages," we say, "empty cages."*

*"Humane treatment"*

*Comparatively speaking, few people are animal rights advocates. Why? Part of the answer concerns our disparate beliefs about how often animals are treated badly. Animal rights advocates believe this is a tragedy of incalculable proportions. Nonadvocates believe mistreatment occurs hardly at all.*

*That nonadvocates think this way seems eminently reasonable. After all, we have laws governing how animals may be treated and a cadre of government inspectors who make sure these laws are obeyed.*

*In the language of our most important federal legislation - the Animal Welfare Act - animals must receive "humane care and treatment." In other words, animals must be treated with sympathy, kindness, mercy and compassion - the very meaning of the word "humane." It says so in any standard dictionary.*

*For fiscal year 2001, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service conducted 12,000 inspections. Of that total, only 140 sites were reported for possible violations because of improper handling of animals. That works out to a compliance rate of almost 99 percent.*

*Inspections and myth*

*Tragically, the public's trust in the adequacy of government inspections is misplaced. What inspection service inspectors count as "humane" undermines the inspections before they are conducted.*

*It only gets worse*

*Per annum, the number of animals used in research laboratories subject to Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service inspections is estimated to be 20 million. This figure, though large, is dwarfed by the 10 billion animals annually slaughtered to be eaten, just in the United States.*

*Remarkably, farm animals are explicitly excluded from the legal protection provided by the Animal Welfare Act. The act says: "The term 'animal' excludes horses not used for research purposes and other farm animals such as but not limited to livestock or poultry used or intended for food or fiber."*

*But if not our government, then who decides what humane care and treatment means for farm animals? In the realpolitik of U.S. animal agriculture, it is the farm animal industries that get to write the rules.*

*"Veal" calves spend their entire lives individually confined in stalls too narrow for them to turn around in. Laying hens live a year or more in cages the size of a filing drawer, seven or more per cage, after which they routinely are starved for two weeks to encourage another laying cycle. Female*

*hogs are housed for four or five years in individual barred enclosures (“gestation stalls”), barely wider than their bodies, where they are forced to birth litter after litter.*

*Until the recent mad cow scare, beef and dairy cattle too weak to stand (“downers”) were dragged or pushed to their slaughter. Geese and ducks are force-fed the human equivalent of 30 pounds of food per day to enlarge their livers, the better to meet the demand for Foie gras.*

*Don’t forget the fiber*

*In the newspeak of the Animal Welfare Act, more than “food” animals fail to qualify as animals. The same is true of any whatchamacallit “used or intended for fiber.” For leather, for example. Or wool. Or fur. This is fact, not fiction. Fur-bearing animals, trapped in the wild or raised on fur mills, are exempt from legal protection, scant though it is, provided by the act. As is true of animal agriculture, the fur industry gets to set its own rules and regulations of “humane care.”*

*On fur mills, mink, chinchilla, raccoon, lynx, foxes and other fur-bearing animals are confined to wire mesh cages for the duration of their lives. Waking hours are spent pacing, rolling their heads, jumping up the sides of their cages, mutilating themselves or cannibalizing their cage-mates.*

*Death is caused by breaking their necks, asphyxiation (using carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide) or by shoving electric rods up their anuses to “fry” them from the inside out. Animals trapped in the wild take, on average, 15 hours. Trapped fur-bearers frequently chew themselves apart in a futile attempt to save their lives.*

*Time to get mad*

*People who trust what industry representatives and government inspectors tell them about the “humane care and treatment” need to get mad as hell for two reasons.*

*First, they have been abused. They have not been told the truth. They have been misled and manipulated by industry and government representatives. “Not to worry, John and Jane Q. Public. Trust us: All is well at the lab, on the farm and in the wild. Animals are being treated humanely.” Trust us? Not any more.*

*Second, animals are being abused. When the organs of animals are crushed and their limbs are severed; when they are made sick by the food they are forced to eat and spend their entire life in isolation; when they are gassed to death or have their necks broken: No propaganda machine in the world can turn these facts into something they are not.*

*If the day comes when the public does get mad as hell, the ranks of animal rights advocates will begin to grow in unprecedented numbers. When this day comes, our shared hope for a world in which animals truly are treated humanely finally will have realistic legs to stand on.*

What emotions does this story bring out in you? What was your initial reaction?

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Is there a balance between emotion and fact?

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How would a non-agricultural person respond to this article?

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What is the goal of the writer? Is there a message he repeats over and over?

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Is it written in a way that is sounds credible?

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Does is generalize all animal handlers and producers?

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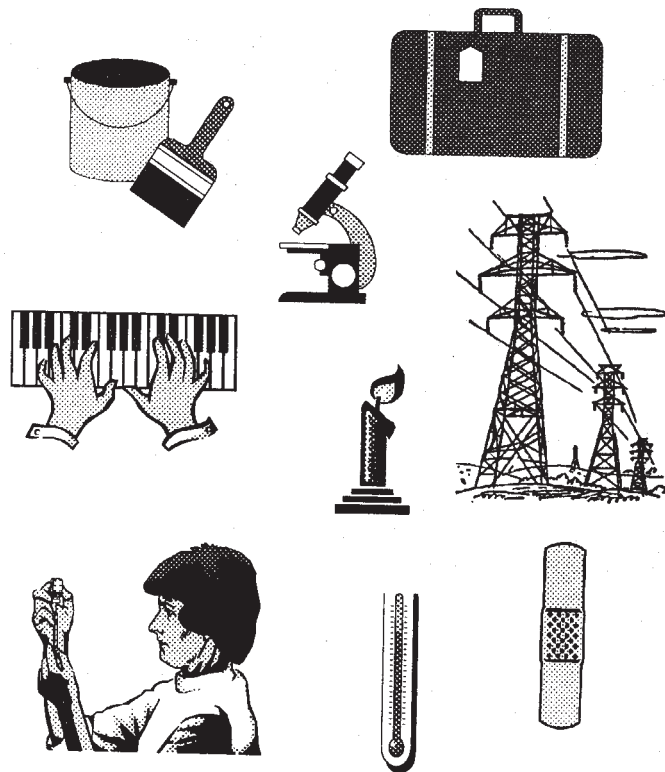
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### Forming Your Own View

Animal related issues are highly emotional. Especially for agricultural producers whose livelihood and way of life depends on the use of animals. How can we ensure our own message is informed? Here are some facts to consider.

- **Agriculture plays an important role in maintaining and improving our standard of living.** Inform people about where their food comes from and that it is humanely produced. Tell them how research has improved the way we care for our animals and the quality of the food products we produce.
- We raise animals for more than meat products. Other products, made from **animal by-products, are a part of our everyday life.**



By-product	Use
Hides	Leather for shoes, jackets, seat covers, footballs, baseballs, soccer balls
Skin	Glue, gelatin
Body chemicals tires,	Detergents, pesticides, industrial oils, coolant for foam for runway use
Blood	Cancer research, shoe polish
Bones	Fertilizer, glass
Hair	Artist brushes, insulation
Hooves	Refining sugar, case hardening steel, crochet needles, gelatin, bone china, photography, X-rays, TYV film, carpets, glue, pectin
Fats/Fatty Acids	Margarine, soap, candles, pet food, fertilizers, Chalk, cosmetics, crayons, floor wax, linoleum, matches
Glands and organs	Insulin, adrenaline, heparin, thyroid tablets, hormones (It takes the pancreas glands from 60,000 cattle to make 1 pound of pure insulin)
Wool Grease	Electrical circuitry, thermometers, 3-D movie glasses
Stearic acid and tallow	Tires, other rubber products, synthetic lubricants for the steel, agricultural and construction industry
Manure	Fertilizer, compost, energy source

**The industry has acted.** Here are examples of how the agriculture industry is ensuring that those involved in the animal industry are informed of the welfare of their animals.

- Livestock producers use the **Recommended Codes of Practice** developed in Canada to guide proper handling of livestock.
- Livestock haulers follow **transportation guidelines** developed through research focused on ensuring the well-being of livestock during transport.
- Producer groups have collaborated to establish the **Alberta Farm Animal Care** to promote and ensure proper care of animals within the industry. They have an Animal Care Alert Line (1-800-506-CARE) where people can report animal treatment concerns. This is a producer driven action line established to help our industry help itself! It allows concerns of animal treatment to be investigated and solved from within before they reach outside activist groups.

- Individual livestock commodity groups have developed livestock care programs within their own associations and provide funding for animal welfare research.
- Animal abusers are prosecuted. The agriculture industry does not put up with animal abuse. Show pride in being an animal welfare supporter.
- Trust your own experience. Most people don't know how animals respond to being handled. You have worked with animals and know what it means to handle them properly.
- Family farms remain the backbone of Canadian agriculture. Focus on the family aspect of farming.

### Animal Activist Groups and the Media

Minority groups (such as animal activist groups) hold a lot of power right now. Creating and promoting issues is the bread and butter of activists. Their main activity is communicating their message and they are highly skilled communicators. They have negative messages to portray which give the media the sensationalism they like. Just glancing through a major newspaper reveals the preference that the media has for telling negative stories, whether they involve animals or not!

In relation to our livestock production story, the message of animal activist groups is foremost in the media, and the minds of the public right now. This puts activists in the position of being able to attack our industry without losing their credibility. Because the positive story of our industry is not foremost in the media right now, you cannot attack back! By attacking the media or an activist you lose credibility. They want you to lose your temper so they can manipulate your story to support their own interests.

You are in the position of educating, not defending. The important thing is not to convince others that you're right, but to be able to stand up for your own view. Many people are still sitting on the fence on these issues. It is vital that they know there are views out there besides those expressed by animal activists. They may even feel supported in their views through your positive story.

Here are some helpful hints for you to use when speaking with the public:

**Bring it Home.** You can help make your audience more comfortable if you can make things personal. If a concern about the industry is expressed, bring it back to a personal level and speak from your experience. Talk about what you do on your farm and use your animals as an example. Whenever possible, leave generalized statements to industry groups and governments.

**Speak to the Public.** In an interview or confrontation with an animal activist, remember you are sending a message to the public and not to the individual you are speaking with. It is important to see beyond the immediate situation and ensure the public receives a useful message.

**Broaden Understanding.** Always explain **why** things are done not just **how**. It is important to explain what would happen if things were done differently.

**Put Things In Perspective.** When we compare past and present, alternative methods, costs and benefits, or draw parallels to every day urban life, people see a complete picture.

**Keep it Simple.** In each interview or confrontation you should try to make only **three** points. Otherwise, your message becomes confused and people become frustrated trying to understand your point of view. Choose effective messages and **repeat, repeat, repeat** whenever possible. Be creative with repeating your points to answer questions. Three simple messages to tell to everyone are:

1. I believe in humane and responsible care of all animals.
2. As Canadians, we enjoy among the safest, most abundant and most affordable food supply in the world.
3. By products from animal agriculture play an important part in improving everyone's way of life.

**Don't be a source of misinformation.** Limit yourself to what you know and are qualified to discuss. If someone asks a question you're unsure of or are uncomfortable answering, refer them to someone qualified to respond. It is better to admit that you don't have an answer, than to give the wrong information.

**Be prepared.** Keep a record of common questions. Spend time researching and refining your answers. If a reporter calls and you aren't prepared to answer questions, ask the reporter what his or her deadline is and if you can call back once you have collected your thoughts. News organizations from urban areas are usually writing for the next day's paper or that night's newscast. If you don't answer their questions immediately or return the call soon, you may not have the opportunity to influence the content of the story. Reporters often write their stories under a deadline. If you can **provide them with a written statement**, they can refer to it as they're writing the story. They'll be more likely to get the facts right.

**If the reporter doesn't ask for information that you feel should be in the story, make your points anyway.** Don't miss your opportunity to tell your side of the story.



## Activity 2

**Be Prepared** Choose two (2) of the following questions or statements of interest to you and relate them to your project animal. Use the pointers in this unit and your knowledge of livestock production to prepare your responses. Share your answers with other members.

- At a show, a young person is concerned about the animals being tied up for so long or kept in pens. She asks you if you'd like to be tied up or penned up all day?
- Animals are just like humans; they feel pain and discomfort. They are abused, neglected and deprived since they are just going to die anyway.
- How can you sell your animal for slaughter? Why do we slaughter animals?
- You overhear someone saying, "Factory farming is only concerned about making a buck. Animals are kept in stressful, confined, unhealthy conditions. They are given antibiotics and other drugs just to stay alive and these contaminate the meat you eat." What would you do or say?
- Your project animal has a brand or some other permanent mark for identification. Someone approaches you with the concern that "such practices are done to make things easier for producers." How would you respond to this?
- Aren't some livestock producers cruel to their animals? How can I trust that you aren't one of them?
- Isn't production of food from animals much less efficient than the production of food from plants?
- What is the point of exhibiting horses and livestock in the show ring? People cheat and will go to any length to win. Besides making animals behave in unnatural ways, there are instances where prizes have been revoked because the exhibitors doctored their animals just to make them win. Is this really educational?
- All animals should have adequate access to outside daylight and fresh air. They should not be forced to live on concrete or metal slabs, slat floors or in cages.

## 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.