



Alberta Farm Animal Care

ANNUAL REPORT

2015



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Message From the Chair

This past year at Alberta Farm Animal Care has been full of transition and change. Although difficult at times, we have powered through the journey to a more inclusive, more efficient, and more effective organization structure (see page 14). This change will result in a wider community of individuals and organizations that are passionate about good animal care – and that’s what we’re here for, after all! A special thanks to our dedicated Board members, who spent tons of time debating the finer details of this change and persevered in creating something that will be stronger and better than AFAC has ever been.

I have heard a multitude of great things about AFAC over the last year. Our renewed communication efforts – articles in popular publications, presentations across the province, participation in industry meetings and events – have really strengthened our presence and the awareness of the work we do. I recently had to list off AFAC’s accomplishments over the past 20 years and the list was overwhelming! We continue to stay nimble and responsive to our members’ needs moving forward. This will result in a few projects coming on board in 2016 that will focus on social engagement, research into how best to reach particular audiences, and collaborative efforts around social license.

We need to always keep in mind that animal care and achieving good animal welfare should be top of mind in our industry. Although we have made great strides in recent years with the introduction of animal care programs, assessment/audit frameworks, and increased communication on hot topics, there is always room for improvement. This improvement needs to come from a place of industry collaboration and cooperation and it makes sense that AFAC would lead the charge here. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again – by working together, as one industry with one voice, we are able to stand strong when met with challenges to our livelihood. We need to hold each other up and hold each other accountable. We need to support the “little” guys with limited resources because this is one industry, not several, and one black eye affects us all.

I encourage all of you to work with AFAC on opportunities to show transparency in your actions. Take advantage of our social network by allowing us to showcase your farm through video or photo opportunities. Our staff loves visiting farms around the province; just get in touch with them!

Finally, I’d like to specifically thank Angela Greter, our Executive Director for her commitment to the organization and for helping us to weather the storm of transition. I’d also like to thank our fantastic staff and our devoted Board of Directors – without all of you this organization could not do half of what it accomplishes.

Remember, animal welfare is everyone’s responsibility and the best way to make sure we are doing a good job is to work together as an industry.

All the best in 2016,

Brian Chomlak | AFAC Chair



Message from the Executive Director

Wow! What an amazing year 2015 was. A time of steady growth and positive change for Alberta Farm Animal Care. Through the commitment of our amazing staff and Board members with respect to adopting a new organization structure, we have now started the transition into a more relevant and useful organization. This change will enable us to provide increased value for our members and will also allow the organization to run more smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

This year was filled with exciting opportunities to spread the word on animal welfare, not only through our phenomenal Livestock Care Conference (see pg. 25) but also through a variety of other events. We were able to connect with each post-secondary school with an agricultural program as well as 4-H groups, Classroom Agriculture Program, and other youth (see pg. 24). Educating and engaging with our industry's future leaders on animal care and welfare is exactly what is needed in order to stay at the forefront of changes in the public mindset. Additionally, better understanding of why a practice, technique, or system is changing helps young producers to make the transition smoothly and to recognize the importance of moving forward rather than staying status quo.

On the other side of that coin, we at AFAC were able to spend time learning from a number of different farmers about how they care for their animals on their farms, what innovative changes they have made over the years, and how they expect to move forward in the future. These farm visits allowed us to gather photos and video footage that we can use in our social media, "Heart of a Farmer" videos, infographics, and other communications to help the industry to bring awareness to all the great work it does, day in and day out.

2015 was also filled with a renewed effort to connect with our current members and grow our membership base. Our improved communication allowed us to develop our programs and extension to meet the needs of the industry. For instance, we were able to host a number of useful workshops, forums, and training opportunities throughout the year including the social media workshop (see pg. 26), producer ambassador "Speaker's Bureau" training (see pg. 29), Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue sessions (see pg. 23), low-stress cattle handling (see pg. 25), and a crisis communications forum (see pg. 27).

One of our greatest achievements from 2015 was the completion of our industry-led revision of each Humane Handling Guideline (see pg. 16). We were also able to begin a long-desired collaborative project aimed at identifying compromised cattle conditions at auctions and abattoirs across the province (see pg. 22). This compromised cattle benchmarking project will allow us to get a better handle on what we're seeing, what should and shouldn't be happening, and how we can direct our extension as an industry to help eliminate animal welfare concerns.

I'd like to extend a huge thank you to our Board of Directors, staff, members and supporters over the past year. Without you, we could not do the work that we do. You are essential to advancing responsible, humane animal care in Alberta and I truly cannot express my gratitude for your support and cooperation. Here's to an even better 2016!

Dr. Angela Greter | Executive Director





Financial Officer's Report

Once upon a time a younger me was employed at a prairie university where I learned, if not the meaning, at least the sentiment behind the phrase 'soft money'. These are dollars that are not guaranteed and future installments are a promise that may or may not come to be depending on the decisions of others and their circumstances at the time. Researchers and not-for-profit organizations like ours make great strides with funds that must be applied for and, if granted, spent wisely and accounted for diligently. Success can be used to leverage future applications and the experience of and fear of failure is a powerful incentive to get it right. We are honoured to be gifted and granted the funds that Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) receives to carry out the vision of this organization's creators and those who have followed in their footsteps.

In 2015, AFAC managed 12 projects, some large and some small, in their varied stages of completion. Each one is different from the others, with activities and deliverables that have timelines and dollar budgets to be balanced. In a year of big changes being made to AFAC's governance structure, maintaining the balance in the projects at the same time has been challenging – yet everyone in the office rose to the challenge and continues to do so. The enthusiasm and support of the Board and its Executive bolstered by that of everyone we meet who shares the passion for the commitment to continuous improvement in animal care and welfare keeps us coming back to our desks each day.

AFAC continues to evolve to efficiently meet the needs of its stakeholders in a meaningful way. The directors, staff, and now Council members, have a strong commitment to the mission, vision and goals of the organization and their passion is another component in the success of the initiatives AFAC delivers. We thank our members, our sponsors, the decisions makers and liaisons at the grant agencies, as well as everyone who participates in an AFAC event or program.

As we leave 2015 behind and move into 2016, I would like to share some excerpts from a blog post that our summer marketing intern, Natalie O., shared as a New Year's message to everyone at the office that could just as easily apply to all who support AFAC.

".....Remember that your work is essential and everything you do matters to the kind of community all of us are trying each day to build.

.....By coordinating programs, delivering services, analyzing data, setting meeting agendas and herding cats, planning budgets, updating websites, ordering supplies, emailing donors, rallying volunteers, writing grants, and the hundreds of other mainly-unappreciated things you do, you are bringing balance and harmony the world so urgently needs." Source:

Jessica Jones, <http://nonprofitwithballs.com/2016/01/welcome-back-to-work-you-sexy-jedi-unicorn/>

Thanks again for your continued support and all the best in 2016,

Sharron Johannesen | Financial Officer



Marketing & Membership Manager's Report

A LOT has happened this year, and I am not just talking about my last name changing from "Hall" to "McDonald" OR my title changing from "Marketing and Communications Manager" to "Marketing and Membership Manager". The change came about so that I could focus more of my time on making sure our current members are satisfied, and to recruit new members to join and take part in our organization.

I have, once again, focused a good chunk of my efforts on spreading the word about Alberta Farm Animal Care to both producers and consumers. This is an extremely rewarding job because I have been able to watch the awareness grow significantly since I first started. I used to start out my presentations to post secondary students by asking: "Who has heard of Alberta Farm Animal Care before"? I used to get one or two hands, and now I usually get at least 25% of the class raising their hands! Progress!

I have had the opportunity to present to almost all of the post secondary schools with an agriculture related program in 2015, and we are in the process of organizing more presentations in 2016. We also branched out a bit and presented to two elementary classes through the Classroom Agriculture Program, which was lots of fun. As usual, we also spent a good amount of time setting up booths so that we could talk to producers and consumers about AFAC and livestock welfare within Alberta.

For those of you that haven't seen yet, Alberta Farm Animal Care has a new website up and running, and it is definitely more current. We are doing our best to keep it up to date with all of our upcoming events and programs. Speaking of events and programs...we did a lot of those this year too, and it seems to be something that our members are really enjoying!

Our social media numbers are continuing to grow, and I am extremely excited about where our organization is going. We seem to have people genuinely interested in Alberta Farm Animal Care and livestock welfare.

I am looking forward to what 2016 brings our way, and to hopefully work with each one of you more in the future!

Kristen McDonald | Marketing and Membership Manager



Communication Coordinator's Report

This year was an exciting one! Jam-packed with events and new opportunities, 2015 flew by way too fast.

March started off our events for the year with our Livestock Care Conference, which was such a great event to be at. I especially enjoyed the diversified livestock panel where we learned about caring for bison, bees, and goats. Then April came and we were headed off to Aggie Days closely followed by our Social Media Workshop hosted with FarmOn. Their inspiring workshop brought out a secret love of video creation I never thought I had before!

Summer then took us to the 2015 Calgary Stampede. Leading up to it, we were able to attend the 2015 Livestock Care and Handlers Session on the grounds. It was great to be able to see what the Stampede is doing to promote and improve upon animal care. As well, we were able to talk to the public from a more informed place about what goes into ensuring the highest level of care during this 10-day event. The rest of the summer was taken up with farm visits all over Alberta where I was given the chance to test out my newly acquired video-making skills. I really gained a lot from these trips; I was able to expand my knowledge about different farm types and livestock as well. I managed to stay busy creating a few new infographics for AFAC and helping update our new website (go check it out)!

Unfortunately, the summer was over too fast and I started back at school but not without a couple of fun events to look forward to. First off was a trip to Red Deer for Speakers Bureau, hosted by our very own Kristen McDonald. It was a great, intimate group, which meant more face time with everyone and one on one exercises. I definitely used some of the tips I learned when giving presentations in class! The next great event was our Crisis Communications Discussion Forum and definitely something I had been looking forward to for awhile. It was even better than I had hoped for! Our two keynotes, Grant Ainsley and Jeff Ansell were both phenomenal presenters who clearly excel at what they do. This was one of those unique opportunities I've been able to take advantage of through AFAC that really accentuates my education!

2015 started off with the end of my third year at the University of Calgary and is now ending as I'm finishing off my fourth year. Being able to work at AFAC while pursuing my BA in Communications has been a real treat. The experiences I've had and opportunities to use skills I've learned in classes have really enriched my education and I love being able to bring what I've learned into a real world setting. I'm really excited to finish up my degree and face more exciting opportunities with AFAC in the future!

Kristen Mortensen | Communications Coordinator



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“Membership in AFAC demonstrates an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in animal care and welfare within Alberta’s livestock industry.”

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Get to Know Alberta Farm Animal Care

Membership in AFAC demonstrates an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in animal care and welfare within Alberta’s livestock industry. We invite individuals, producers, industry organizations, and others to become valued members of AFAC.

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AFAC’S PRIMARY BUSINESS IS ANIMAL CARE AND WELFARE

The value of AFAC lies in the focus on farm animals. Our staff have specialized in animal welfare and are skilled at understanding animal behaviour, being able to interpret research, and providing expertise to our members on animal care or welfare issues/concerns. While keeping aware of many related issues (production, markets, economics, etc.), we are spending our time and resources on high-level animal health and welfare topics that are beneficial to the industry as a whole. As such, we are uniquely equipped to keep our members informed on need-to-know topics in the field.

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AFAC OPERATES VIA A COLLABORATIVE SPIRIT

Each of our members provide a unique perspective from their farm, business, or organization. By providing a forum for discussion, AFAC is able to strengthen the industry from within.

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AFAC IS A TRUSTED SOURCE

Based on recent consumer research, we know that the public view us as a third party source of information. Because of this, AFAC is uniquely placed to connect with individuals, students, youth, and communities. We are able to cultivate and maintain a deeper connection with skeptical consumers than a commodity organization can do on its own.

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AFAC IS MADE UP OF DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS

We are a small organization made up of knowledgeable, passionate and skilled individuals. We do not answer to a parent organization or a national body. This allows us to be open, honest, and transparent in all our communications.

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AFAC IS DRIVEN ON ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The emerging formula for effective communication with the public (Center for Food Integrity) starts with a solid grounding in ethical principles followed by verifiable science, and finished up with economic viability. AFAC was started by a livestock industry that recognized the need for moral consideration of farm animals in our care and, thus, is thoroughly grounded on ethical principles. We continue this tradition today.

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Alberta Farm Animal Care Adopts a New Governance Structure

The year 2015 will be remembered as a year of major transition for Alberta Farm Animal Care. In the fall of 2014, AFAC staff met individually with all commodity organization members. It was identified that the current governance structure of AFAC was not working well; the organization was losing value with its commodity members. As a result, three new structures were proposed to the AFAC Board in December 2014. After much discussion, a Council format was widely agreed to be that which would best move AFAC’s mandate forward. This structure is more inclusive and allows individual producers, industry organizations, and service providers an opportunity to become more engaged with the organization and with industry.

WHAT IS THE “ADVISORY COUNCIL”?

The Advisory Council includes all voting members who choose to attend Council meetings – likely three meetings each year. The focus of each meeting will be to learn about, discuss and debate topics of farm animal welfare in order to direct the activities of AFAC. In general, the Council is about information sharing and idea generation, not decision making. The meetings will feature invited speakers, small group breakouts, and large group discussion.

At the end of each meeting, attendees will have learned something about other species or sectors of the industry. Additionally, Council will recommend projects, activities, communications, studies, surveys etc. that AFAC or AFAC members can undertake to enhance animal welfare in Alberta with respect to the selected topic(s).

Member organizations may send one staff member as well as their designated Council member (typically a producer) to Council meetings. This will allow the greater AFAC membership to benefit from the knowledge of staff and input of producers, handlers, and processors. Any gaps in animal welfare will be easily identified by this inclusive structure and discussion format and recommendations made by Council will guide AFAC’s strategic plan, goals, projects, and programs moving forward.

WHAT WILL THE BOARD DO NOW?

The AFAC Board will now include a maximum of 8 members selected from the voting membership (the Advisory Council) at the AGM in March each year. Most importantly, the Board will become a governance Board, whose responsibilities are to ensure the directions from Council

are implemented. Once someone is elected to the AFAC Board, they will remove their “organization or producer hat” and put on their “AFAC hat” – they now represent AFAC, not a specific organization.

The majority of the Board must still represent commodity organizations and the Board will set the direction of AFAC through strategic planning every other year. A good set of policies to guide staff decision-making will be established, reviewed, and maintained. Overall, the implementation of the strategic plan and operations will be delegated to staff, which is consistent with a governing Board structure.

We are extremely excited about this change and hope that our members continue to support the organization as we move through this transition period over 2016!

AFAC MEMBERS

AFAC BOARD MEMBERS

- Alberta Auction Markets Association
- Alberta Beef Producers
- Alberta Chicken Producers
- Alberta Equestrian Federation
- Alberta Federation of Agriculture
- Alberta Goat Association
- Alberta Hatching Egg Producers
- Alberta Lamb Producers
- Alberta Pork
- Alberta Milk
- Alberta Turkey Producers
- Alberta Veterinary Medical Association
- Egg Farmers of Alberta
- University of Alberta Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences
- University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
- Western Stock Growers Association
- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

ACTIVE MEMBERS

- Alberta Cattle Feeders’ Association
- Alberta Elk Commission
- Alberta Goat Association
- Alberta Hatchery Association
- Bison Producers of Alberta
- Calgary Stampede
- Canada/Alberta Livestock Research Trust Inc.
- Edmonton Northlands
- Feeder Associations of Alberta Ltd.
- Horse Racing Alberta
- Lakeland College, Agricultural Services
- Lethbridge and District Exhibition
- Olds College, School of Animal Science
- Western Hog Exchange

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Alberta Barley
- Alberta Wheat
- ATB Financial
- Bouvry Exports Calgary Ltd.
- Cargill Foods
- Clear Hills County
- Crossfield Ag Society
- Diamond 7
- Elanco Animal Health
- Feedlot Health Management Services
- Flagstaff County
- Hastings Lake Pleasure Horse Association
- Highland Feeders Limited
- Mink Hollow Farm (Katrin Becker)
- L.E.D Farms
- Lilydale Foods
- MD of Bonnyville
- MD of Ranchland
- Olymel
- Red Deer County
- Richter Farms Ltd.
- Rocky View County
- Shipwheel Cattle Feeders
- Starland County
- Stettler Veterinary Clinic
- Stockyards Veterinary Services Ltd.
- STS Farms
- Strangmuir Farms
- Sundgaard Poultry Meat
- Farm Ltd.
- Trochu Meat Processors
- Turkey Farmers of Canada
- United Farmers of Alberta
- Co-operative Limited
- Winter’s Turkeys



Making Good Decisions Got a Little Easier in 2015

The Humane Handling Guidelines are an important and much-valued tool for the livestock industry. Separated by species, these booklets contain information and images on health conditions, the Codes of Practice, transportation concerns ("Should This Animal be Loaded?"), relevant regulations/legislation, and euthanasia/disposal guidelines.

The Guidelines for horses, pigs, beef cattle, dairy cattle, and sheep were updated through 2015 via an industry-led initiative. Collaboration between producers, commodity organizations, veterinarians, the Alberta SPCA, and the Alberta government has enabled these resources to be factually correct, well-written, and useful. The Guidelines are distributed to producers across the province through

AFAC and our industry partners. They are also available to anyone else working with livestock, such as auction markets, abattoir staff, inspectors, etc.

The Guidelines are intended to help producers, handlers, and livestock owners to make good decisions on how to deal with particular health concerns or conditions. Better understanding of check points to look for as well as management options for each condition are outlined throughout the Guideline.

Improving understanding and awareness of potential problems is an important step to creating a more proactive industry with respect to animal care and welfare. This project was an overwhelming success!



Livestock Welfare Extension and Training – A partnership with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

The Livestock Welfare Extension and Training (LWET) project has been part of the relationship between AFAC and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry for a number of years. The grant helps AFAC accomplish activities related to each of our strategic goals and as such is a fantastic demonstration of the collaborative partnership between industry and government on the issue of animal care and welfare. This funding is a multi-year agreement to deliver targeted Extension and Training initiatives for/to/within the livestock industry of Alberta.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Management of programs developed and delivered by AFAC includes: ALERT Line, Emergency Livestock Handling Trailers and Training

CONNECTING WITH THE LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY INDUSTRY

The goals of this work are to promote AFAC and its mandate to promote responsible animal care, to gather information pertinent to animal care issues that may be important to the Alberta livestock industry, and to advance work aimed at mitigating challenges (perceived, anticipated or current). This may include:

- Meetings and events - including but not limited to: government, producer groups and other stakeholders, joint efforts to connect with the public (e.g. Aggie Days, Stampede), 4-H and other youth groups, AB Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Steering Committee

- Communication/messaging on AFAC and the livestock industry's animal care issues – e.g. discussion/education on the animal welfare system in Alberta, proactive statements and messaging, and information on emergency preparedness
- Resource development and provision – e.g. Humane Handling Guidelines, factsheets, "How To" guidelines, infographics
- Volunteer and student short term employment or project management (through Capstone, Serving Communities Internship Program, NSERC research scholarships, and Canada Summer Jobs)
- Workshops and training opportunities – animal handling, Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue, The Real Dirt on Farming producer ambassador training, crisis communications forum

As we continue to work on our strategic goals, the work that we do through this grant will shift slightly. Over the last year, we have focused more on addressing public trust and maintenance of social license (with respect to animal care and welfare) with the general public. We continue to grow and become more effective through the support of the Alberta government and our member partners.



Moving Forward – AFAC Participation in Industry Research



Alberta Farm Animal Care has collaborated with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), through an Industrial Postgraduate Scholarship program, to support the project “A benchmarking survey of animal care practices in cow-calf operations in western Canada”. This support goes toward funding Dr. Melissa Moggy, a Master’s student at the University of Calgary. Her project will evaluate cow-calf operations across western Canada, focusing on management practices related to pain and stress, such as those outlined in the “Code of Practice for the care and handling of beef cattle”. Research on these topics has progressed since the initial Code of Practice was released in 1991 and was the main focus of scientific review for its revision in 2013, illustrating the importance of these topics.

Over the past year, numerous progress checkpoints have been accomplished towards the research objectives. An expert panel was assembled, consisting of researchers, veterinarians, and producers from each western province (MB, SK, AB) and three national representatives. The panel assisted in selecting topics significant to western Canadian cow-calf operations.

The selected topics included: dystocia, castration, disbudding/dehorning, cattle identification, handling, weaning, and euthanasia. The survey was distributed to 109 producers enrolled in the Western Canadian Cow-Calf Surveillance Network in July 2015. Responses are currently being collected and entered into a database. One-on-one on-farm interviews have been done to explore producers’ perception of pain in cattle, perceptions of the use of pain and stress control practices, perceptions of euthanasia decision-making, and producers’ perceptions regarding the revised Code of Practice.

In addition to working on this project, Melissa has been able to assist AFAC in our goals. She has written 7 fact sheets that provide producers with a sort of “how to” for castration (3 methods), dehorning (2 methods), and weaning (2 methods). She has also written a handful of beef “Considering the Codes” information sheets, which outline and explain the requirements and recommendations suggested by the Code regarding dehorning. Additionally, Melissa has assisted in developing relevant infographics and an ALERT Line webinar. Finally, she has had the opportunity to attend events with AFAC, including our Livestock Care Conference, Aggie Days, Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue workshop, Calgary Stampede, a Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef meeting, and the Crisis Communication Forum.

“I feel extremely lucky that I get the chance to work with/represent AFAC at these events and have the chance to discuss animal welfare with both industry partners and the public.” – Dr. Melissa Moggy

Reflections from the ALERT Line Coordinator

It has been my privilege to coordinate the ALERT Line since its inception in 1995. At that time Alberta Farm Animal Care had already been recognized in the industry as an innovative organization with a mandate to improve animal welfare. AFAC understood that animal welfare was a growing concern to the public and that overall our industry was under scrutiny and we needed to be proactive rather than reactive when addressing concerns.

68
TOTAL CASES

30
BEEF CASES

1
BISON CASE

31
HORSE CASES

1
PIG CASE

2
SHEEP CASES

3
“OTHER” CASES

1676
ANIMALS HELPED

72
INFORMATION CALLS

WHAT IS THE ALERT LINE?

The ALERT Line is a 1-800 call line that the public and producers alike can access to report or discuss any animal care concerns. ALERT volunteers, made up of skilled livestock personnel, provide non-confrontational counsel to producers in need of management advice – providing intervention before enforcement is needed. Since it began 20 years ago, the Line has more than fulfilled that mandate. It provides a listening ear or sounding board as much as a service. It is an educational tool that can provide the public, who generally have little understanding of the livestock industry, with a resource for their questions and concerns. We are by no means the only line that provides information but we are the only one that provides a 24/7 service and that is unique in our industry.

CALLS IN 2015

The number of calls in 2015 varied with the conditions; lack of shelter is a major concern for the public whenever there is extreme weather on either end of the scale. With badly overgrazed pastures and the high cost of feed, animals were entering the winter months in poor body condition. A majority of calls centered around animals not being provided with supplemental feed or extra bedding and only snow for a water source.

OTHER CONCERNS

Other concerns in 2015 included: absentee owners, poor management, crowded conditions, lack of proper treatment for injured animals, old and/or extremely thin animals, stray animals, overgrown hooves, lack of deworming, too many animals on a property, dead animals left in the view of the public, and animals standing knee deep in mud and manure. It is important to note that many of these calls are unfounded or only require a nudge or reminder to the producer that they are under surveillance by the public and need to move their animal care up a notch or two. Throughout the 20 years that this program has been running, this reminder is usually successful in eliminating the problem.

Information-type calls are also received and involve things like: information on transportation regulations, emergency livestock handling trailer locations, divorce and legal disputes involving animals, questions about animals that are vocalizing excessively, isolated animals possibly left behind when the herd is taken home, concerns for pets with no shelter, homes for “give away” animals, and disgruntled neighbor disputes.

With the help of a visionary Board of Directors, Executive Director, staff, and a collection of well respected industry representatives and volunteers, the ALERT Line has helped make our livestock industry more aware of animal welfare and our role within it. The public continues to gain confidence that we in the livestock industry are listening and responding to their concerns.

Pam Miller | ALERT Line Coordinator

Update on the Emergency Livestock Handling Trailers

The Emergency Livestock Handling Equipment Trailer and Training program originally involved the purchase and outfitting of five trailers for distribution around the province. Since implementation in November 2012, an additional seven trailers have joined the program. We continue to have interest from other counties within Alberta as well.

The trailers were used in the following incidents:

5

CATTLE LINER ROLLOVERS

200

LOOSE CATTLE

3

PIG LINER ROLLOVERS

The trailers were also used to seize the following animals:

122

HORSES

177

CATTLE

17

LLAMAS

TRAILER ACTIVITY

In speaking to a representative from each of the twelve trailer locations, we discovered that the trailers were used in the following incidents:

- There were 5 **cattle liner rollovers** in the past year. There was also one response to a **smaller stock trailer** that contained 4 yearling calves. The responders used a variety of different tools from the trailer including the lights (as the event happened at night), a saw and panels to deal with the emergencies.
- There was also a response to 200 **loose cattle** near a feedlot that one of the trailers responded to. They used their cattle handling skills to get them back where they needed to be.
- There were 3 **pig liner rollovers** in the past year. Once again, the responders used a variety of different tools from the trailer to deal with the emergency.
- One of the Livestock Emergency Handling Trailers was also called out to get a **horse out of a dugout**. This was done successfully!

There were multiple incidents that the trailers were called out to deal with, but was called off because the emergency had already been dealt with including:

- 1 Situation with loose cattle
- 2 **Cattle liner rollovers**

This shows us that there is always room for improvement and more trailers are needed in order to provide a faster response.

We have also worked closely with the trailers to try and raise awareness about their availability and to showcase the equipment on them. This took place at the following events:

- Three “Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue” Workshops (Olds, Drumheller, Leduc)
- Alberta Goat Association AGM
- Medicine Hat Stampede
- MD of Willow Creek Farm & Acreage Emergency Preparedness Workshop

We have more events in 2016 where we hope to showcase the trailers and encourage people to utilize the resources that are available to them. We will be partnering with Red Deer County and their trailer to speak at the 2016 Disaster Forum in Banff, Alberta. Please see the article about the Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue Workshops to see how you can learn more about livestock rescue!

With this initiative, as is the case with ambulances and fire trucks, we are hopeful that responders will never have

to use the equipment that they have. However, by having these available in the event of an emergency we are better equipped to save lives – both animal and human!

Relationships with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, RCMP and other key groups in the province will be further developed in order to facilitate communication around the trailer network and to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the AFAC program.



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It is so handy to have it, and doesn't matter how long it takes to get it from one end of the province to another. It is still faster and easier than trying to find local equipment”
- Ken Dean, Alberta SPCA



Industry-led Collaboration Leads to the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project

In 2015, Alberta Farm Animal Care began a project to benchmark the incidence of compromised cattle arriving at auction markets and abattoirs throughout Alberta. This project, running until spring 2018, is focused on understanding how often animals that would be considered compromised by CFIA arrive at different types of facilities, and identifying possible risk factors associated with cattle arriving in a compromised condition.

Compromised cattle are those with a reduced capacity to withstand transportation. Transportation with special provisions that will not lead to undue suffering is still acceptable for these animals, however they must be transported directly to the nearest available place for care, treatment, slaughter, or euthanasia. This is different from animals that would be classified as unfit, and may only be transported under advice of a veterinarian for diagnosis or care.

Guided by a diverse advisory team, including producer group representatives, researchers, and industry professionals, this project will provide robust, factual reports for the cattle industry and scientific publication.

This information will be important in the case of an animal welfare crisis or media event to be able to credibly report that these events are not the industry norm. There is also an opportunity for us to recognize any issues of concern as an industry, and work towards improvements if these are found.

To collect the data necessary for this study, AFAC has partnered with 8 auction markets and 10 abattoirs throughout Alberta. Once data collection is complete, the results will be shared with industry, as well as used to guide any necessary training or education towards areas of concern within the various industry groups.

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“There is also an opportunity for us to recognize any issues of concern as an industry, and work towards improvements if these are found.”



Be prepared: Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue

If you saw a horse stuck in a well, would you know what to do? Or if you came across a cattle liner and had to safely remove the animals and get them into a secure location, would you know how?

We brought Dr. Rebecca Gimenez in from Georgia to talk about the above situations, as well as many other situations that large animals can get into. Dr. Gimenez has a company called “Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue” (TLAER) and she specializes in dealing with livestock (and other large animal) emergencies.

After hearing about Rebecca and this course, we were asked to organize and put one on here in Alberta. We listened and we responded! Our first course took place in Olds, Alberta in June 2015, and we had just over 50 people attend. The course is designed to talk about some basic awareness level rescue techniques for livestock in all situations and includes a good mix of classroom and hands-on activities as well as a comprehensive textbook.

Rebecca delivers a presentation and is very good at getting all of the attendees involved. There are multiple demonstrations where the class gets involved and some of the attendees get to be “large animals” and the rest of the group has to “rescue” them. We also try our best to make sure that one of the province’s 12 Livestock Emergency Handling Equipment Trailers is in attendance. Rebecca also asks us to set up a “bale burning demo” so that some of the

students have the opportunity to use a fire extinguisher – which most people have never done before! Of course, alongside the demo, we make sure that a fire truck is in attendance just in case something gets out of hand, but also so that the attendees have the opportunity to see what equipment is on a fire truck that could be used in a livestock emergency.

After the first course we were asked to deliver a few others to maximize the uptake across the province. We have now completed the course in Leduc and Drumheller as well. Future workshops are in development to continue this training throughout the province.

Not only does this course provide people with the skills to handle livestock in emergencies, but it also allows them to meet and interact with people that they would not normally interact with. For example, a veterinarian might not normally interact with a fire fighter, but at this course, they are able to do so. Once this conversation starts, it is exciting to hear the attendees talk about the possibilities and what they can do to make livestock, rescue, and the safety of the people involved the best that it can be.

Throughout this whole process, not only can we feel great about the steps that the people within our province are taking, but we also create new connections and friendships with the attendees.

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“Not only does this course provide people with the skills to handle livestock in emergencies, but it also allows them to meet and interact with people that they would not normally interact with.”



Make a Positive Change – Connect With Our Future

Alberta Farm Animal Care is an organization that was created for producers and we are constantly striving to find ways to talk with producers about the programs and resources that we offer to them.

Why not start with the young producers and up and coming industry professionals? That's what we thought too!

Although we had presented to many of the schools in the past, last year was the first year that we were able to connect with all post-secondary institutions with an agricultural program. As we evaluated this strategy at the end of the year we found that it had been a wonderful initiative appreciated by both the teachers and students. As an added bonus, it also really helped with our student attendance at the Livestock Care Conference!

Although each presentation is different, we always focus on what Alberta Farm Animal Care is and take the time to distinguish the difference between animal welfare and animal rights. Depending on the amount of time, sometimes there is a more specific activity with the students, like a debate or a discussion. Lastly, we talk about the resources available to the students and how they can access them and use them to their advantage. We always encourage the students to get involved with Alberta Farm Animal Care, even if it is just through attending the Livestock Care Conference.

We are looking forward to this continued involvement with post secondary students, and we are extremely excited to see what they accomplish in the future!

“

“We always focus on what Alberta Farm Animal Care is and take the time to distinguish the difference between animal welfare and animal rights.”

Livestock Care Conference

The 2015 Livestock Care Conference was a resounding success! For those of you that have been attending our conference for years now, you were probably excited to see that we brought in some hands on training. Curt Pate and Kent Fenton taught the audience how to handle cattle in a low stress manner and how to body condition score, respectively. The audience literally got their “hands on” the cattle to determine where the animal fell on the body condition scoring scale. Thanks also to James Jenkins and Chris Israelson for allowing us to use their animals for these demonstrations.

200+

REGISTRANTS

7+

SCHOOLS
REPRESENTED

65

INDUSTRY EXPERTS
FEATURED

This past year we had over 200 registrants! Not only is that the largest amount of people to ever attend a Livestock Care Conference, but it also meant that 200+ people had the opportunity to learn some extremely valuable information about livestock welfare. As a multi-species organization, we always strive to make sure we include some of the smaller commodities and alternative species. Our “Diversified Panel” was made up of a representative from bison, goat, and a beekeeper – providing a unique perspective to those in the audience that were unfamiliar with diversified livestock.

The conference was held at the Calgary Stampede Grounds in Calgary, which was a beautiful location. Don't worry though, next year the conference will take place in Olds, AB so that nobody has to drive into the middle of a big city! Thanks to everybody that took the post conference survey – we are listening.

As always, we had fantastic keynote speakers in 2015 that kept the audience engaged throughout the conference, and I know for a fact that the networking opportunities were outstanding.

Our student sponsorship program was another huge success, thanks to our keen students and the generous sponsors. We had students from Olds College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge College, Grande Prairie Regional College: Fairview Campus, University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and the University of Alberta. The students add a wonderfully unique vibrancy to the conference and are always happy to engage in discussion and dialogue with their sponsors and other attendees.

The “Meet the Experts” session featured around 65 “Industry Experts” and was held for the students on the first afternoon of the conference. The session focused on networking between students and industry professionals to ensure that our youth know what opportunities lie beyond school. This session is always getting better and we have plans to improve the experience significantly in 2016.

The goal for LCC is to provide information and speakers that appeal to all sectors of the livestock industry. Despite a fantastic conference in 2015, we feel as though each year gives us the opportunity to improve and advance our conference, and that is what we will continue to do next year!



We Never Stop Learning...



This summer was such an exciting time because of a great opportunity we were able to take part in. With the help of some welcoming producers, AFAC staff made it to many different farms all over Alberta! The driving force behind arranging these tours was to continue our 'Heart of a Farmer' video series. After an

awesome course from FarmOn, we headed out on our own to begin filming. Over the short summer we managed to get to 8 different farms and a feedlot.

The point of these short videos is to show a day in the life of an Albertan farmer, but not just the good things about farming. We wanted to show the tough times and the emotional times too. We really tried to capture the farmers in action with their animals and WE DID!

The first day was a broiler farm, dairy, and a laying hen operation. It was a sunny day, the weather decided to cooperate with us and we couldn't have asked for more friendly or welcoming farmers to show us around and make sure we were fed. Our streak of good luck, great people,

and amazing food continued as we managed to visit another dairy farm, as well as elk, bison, turkey, sheep, and a feedlot before the summer was over.

As we learned in the Social Media workshop, everybody needs to have their own roles, and it works great if you actually enjoy what you are doing. After the farm tours, our Communications Coordinator, Kristen Mortensen, used her new skills to work on creating videos. She finished her first one this past October featuring Marc and Hinke Therrien, who have a turkey farm just outside Fort Saskatchewan.

Besides the great footage that we were able to get, these visits became a wonderful learning opportunity for all of us. Our staff have different levels of experience with livestock and these trips were able to get us all on the same page so that we can consistently answer questions. This can be applicable in so many areas of our work, especially for public events. We get lots of questions about animal care practices for all different livestock species and actually seeing it first hand makes it a lot easier to answer questions.

We are currently working on finishing up the "Heart of a Farmer" video from an elk farm we visited. Stay tuned for more over the coming year!

Talking About Animal Welfare through Storytelling

We really took off this year with telling our story – both the story of AFAC and the stories of our members. There were so many exciting projects and social media ventures this year that helped to boost our brand! In January, we finished up our social media contests – thanks to everyone that participated and a huge thanks to all our member groups that donated an awesome prize. Already our numbers on Facebook and Twitter have grown exponentially, and with the expertise of our communications team we've been engaging more and more with the agriculture industry on Twitter.

Already mentioned a few times in our Annual Report is our continuing 'Heart of a Farmer' video series that we have recently started making in-house. Our latest one takes you for an inside look at an Alberta turkey farm. Watch for more videos in the New Year! We're also super excited about the new AFAC infographics that we're using at our booths and a new "Animal Rights vs. Animal Welfare" handout that we have been giving out to post-secondary students to help start a conversation on the difference between these two philosophies.

We're especially excited to announce that a new children's workbook will be coming out in the New Year. We stuffed it full of fun, educational games and puzzles as well as short 'Meet a Real Alberta Farmer' exposés that feature producers from our 'Heart of a Farmer' videos and from our Farmers of Alberta social media campaign. This is a great book to really encourage kids to learn about farm animal care and basic farming practices. It's engaging and broad enough that it will appeal to all different ages.



What to do When the Headline is YOU!

This past October we had the unique opportunity to host a Crisis Communications Discussion Forum in Calgary. We brought in top professionals in communications to headline this two-day workshop. On the first day Grant Ainsley, Journalist and Public Relations Specialist, gave a captivating talk about media relations and organizing communications within your company or organization. He also let us in on the number one rule of media relations (feed the dog!). The next morning, Investigative Journalist Jeff Ansell led an interactive presentation on dealing with the media. He really engaged the audience by creating practice scenarios and then providing step-by-step instructions on how to respond to each one.

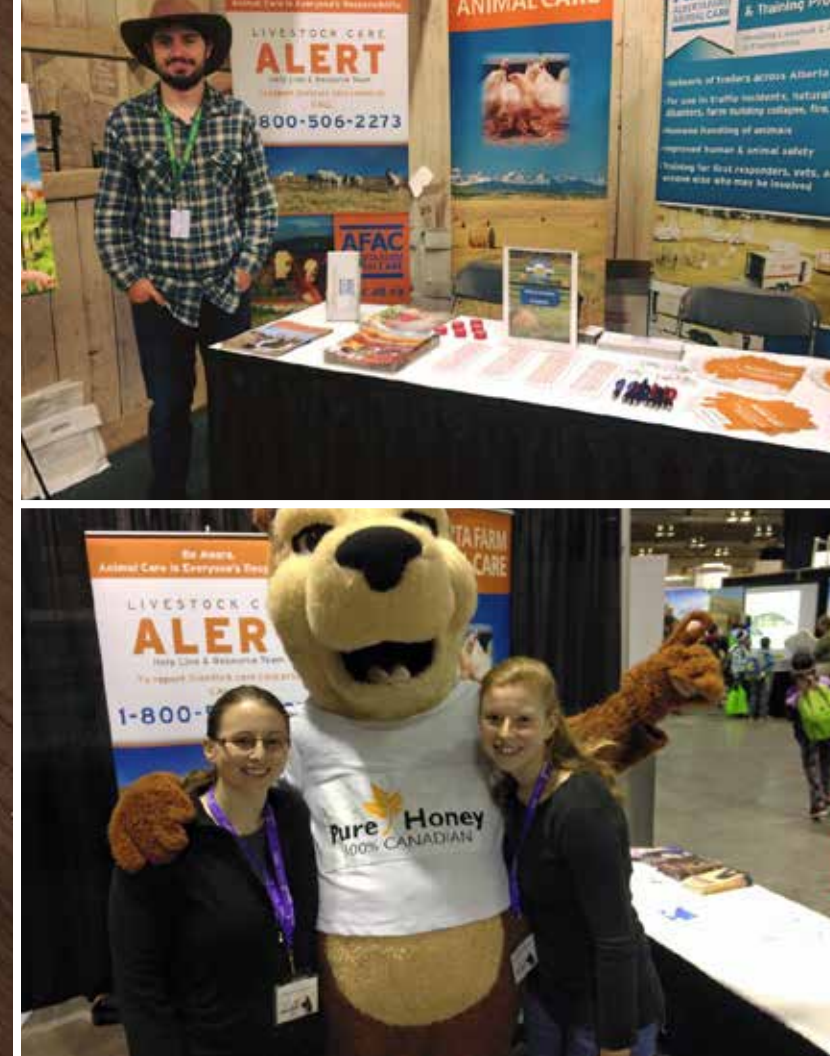
After lunch, there were representatives from the BC SPCA and Spray Lakes Sawmill who provided us with an inside look into their respective industries. Gord Lehn from Spray Lakes Sawmill reminded us to "let science be your friend, but don't forget the heart" when discussing tough issues. Marcie Moriarty from the BC SPCA gave us insight on the sled dog cull and the Chilliwack dairy W5 video, as well as details on how her industry initially responded to these events and the aftermath that followed.

At the end of the day there was a panel discussion comprised of speakers from the Western Hog Exchange, Egg Farmers of Alberta, Cenovus Energy, the BC SPCA, and Spray Lakes Sawmill. This was a great opportunity for the audience to ask any questions regarding the panellists' industries or their own crisis communication plans.

This workshop was hosted in order to better serve our members and the livestock community as a whole. When a crisis hits, dealing with the media may not be the first thing on your mind. Having the background knowledge needed to respond to media and to come up with a statement, all while handling the immediate crisis, is imperative in order to protect your organization's brand.

This event ended up being a tremendous learning experience for everyone here at the AFAC office and all who attended the event. A huge thank you to ALMA for providing the funding that enabled us to host the forum!

“Having the background knowledge needed to respond to media and to come up with a statement, all while handling the immediate crisis, is imperative in order to protect your organization's brand.”



Tell Your OWN Story or Someone Else Will

In January of 2015, Kristen McDonald, our Marketing and Membership Manager, traveled to Guelph, Ontario to a “Train the Trainer” session for the “Real Dirt on Farming”: Speakers’ Bureau Workshop. Our sister organization, Farm and Food Care Ontario had started putting this course on in Ontario and, with much success, decided to get representatives in as many provinces as they could.

This workshop was designed for producers and industry professionals in an effort to encourage them to get out there and tell their story about farming. Throughout the course the attendees learn public speaking skills as well as how to answer those tough questions that we often get from consumers.

We held our first Speakers’ Bureau Workshop on October 6, 2015. Attendance was lower than we would have liked but we were able to have some great discussions and gain some really great feedback about the course itself.

If an organization sees the value in hosting one of these workshops, we are available to facilitate a custom session. For more details and to get a quote on what this would cost, contact the AFAC office.

Out and About at Alberta Farm Animal Care

We had more events to attend this year than ever before and they were a blast!

AGGIE DAYS

We started out with Aggie Days down at the Stampede grounds in April. We always love talking to the many students, parents, and teachers that come through. This is one of the best opportunities to reach such a large crowd of eager learners. One thing that we recognized after this event was that we needed a better way to reach the kids with our messages. Thus, we came up with an interactive game based on the five freedoms! The game challenges participants to place a number of items on our Velcro board in order to fulfill the five freedoms for the animals on it.

CALGARY STAMPEDE

We first got the chance to test it out at the Calgary Stampede and it was a definite hit – we even had a few adults try and beat it! We also had some great questions, handed out a lot of new AFAC material and felt that it was a fun and productive ten days.

LETHBRIDGE AGGIE DAYS

Next up was Lethbridge Aggie Days, which was fantastic. The building was set up really well, which allowed us to talk to lots of different kids from the area. We have already reserved a booth location for next year.

MEDICINE HAT STAMPEDE

We then journeyed over to Medicine Hat for their Stampede, which was a whole bunch of fun and where we met some great people from different industries. We would love to see more representatives from the agriculture industry there with us next year!

FARM FAIR IN EDMONTON

Last up for this year was Farm Fair in Edmonton, which was a slightly different opportunity than we’re used to. We were able to meet and talk with more producers than public, which is usually quite the opposite for most of our booth events. We had an overwhelmingly positive response to our projects and programs, which was very encouraging as we move forward through transition.

We would love to thank all of our volunteers from this year who took the time out of their busy schedules to help us out at our booths. We couldn’t make the impact that we do without the amazing effort that you put in. We’re always looking for more wonderful, enthusiastic people to help out so if you are interested please contact the AFAC office.

“

“We would love to thank all of our volunteers from this year who took the time out of their busy schedules to help us out at our booths. We couldn’t make the impact that we do without the amazing effort that you put in.”

AFAC TIMELINE

1988 -1992

- OFAC (ON), MFAC (MB), FACS (SK) and an Alberta ‘Livestock Issues Coalition’ formed
- AB industry decides to focus on animal welfare & calls group Alberta Foundation for Animal Stewardship

1993-1995

- Name changes to Alberta Foundation for Animal Care & by-laws established
- Perspectives newsletter launched
- Animal Care ALERT Line started
- Livestock Transportation Review completed
- Dr. Jeff Goodwin tells us at the AGM “While it is essential to tell our side of the story, the focus should be less on a positive public perception and more on an accurate one”

1996-1999

- 4-H Learning About Animal Welfare launched
- Alberta Livestock Protection System (ALPS) set up
- Livestock Care Conference series started
- Elementary student / teacher resources completed
- Name change to Alberta Farm Animal Care
- Cattle & pig hauling courses launched
- Issue reports & INSIGHTS started

2000-2002

- McDonald’s adds animal welfare to QA protocols
- AFAC Research fund initiated
- AFAC Awards of Distinction started
- ALIDF supports AFAC’s Communication Plan
- Livestock Care Response Plan put in place due to drought

2003

- BSE case in Alberta - US border closes to cattle, sheep & bison
- Grades 7-12 student / teacher resource completed
- Livestock care consulting veterinarian Dr. R Fenton joins AFAC
- Swine humane handling guidelines completed

2004

- AFAC & ABVMA co-sponsor Dr. Grandin to speak in Fairview, Vermilion & Lethbridge
- Dairy humane handling guidelines completed
- Horse Welfare in Alberta report / brochure released
- PMU contracts ended
- Handle with Care cards developed (horse & cattle)
- Alberta Canada Livestock Research Partnership initiated

2005

- International Animal Transportation meeting in Calgary
- US border re-opens to cattle, sheep & bison
- Livestock transport training program underway with industry advisory team
- Beef & sheep humane handling guidelines completed
- Animal Protection Act & Regulations revised
- National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) launched

2006

- What’s on Your Plate? Consumer messaging started
- Animal Protection Act (APA) & Regulations revisions enacted
- Downer Benchmarking Study completed
- Review of Humane Transport Regs coordinated
- Putting Farm Animal Welfare on the Agenda joint project begins

2007

- Launched Certified Livestock Transporter (CLT) training program & support services.
- Be Prepared for Winter program launched
- Beef Cattle Transportation benchmarking survey underway
- Beef, dairy, swine, sheep humane handling guidelines reprinted
- The Alberta Equine Welfare Group is established
- Euthanasia training program started with ABVMA

2008

- Alberta Horse Welfare Report & horse humane handling guideline completed
- Farmers Care for their Animals booklet revised

2009

- Livestock Transport Conference held in Calgary
- On-Call Vet program (ALERT Line) expanded
- Alberta Livestock Protection Network (ALPN) established
- Livestock Emergency Response Video created & distributed

2010

- Relocation of AFAC office to Calgary
- AFAC board Governance structure revisited
- Progress was made towards a national CLT program

2011

- Livestock Care Conference – increased student participation, interactive sessions and networking focus
- CLT project to create a Canadian program initiated; Total active certifications: 1,613
- Increasing animal rights activist pressures felt by the Canadian livestock industry
- AFAC participated in the first Cattle Trail exhibit at the Calgary Stampede and educated attendees on animal care and Canadian Livestock Transport (CLT)

2012

- Five trailers containing livestock handling equipment developed & deployed throughout the province
- Information Leadership Initiative and its various communication tools created
- CLT certification program has 1479 active certifications

2013

- CLT moved from AFAC to the Canadian Animal Health Coalition
- Started working with post secondary students through the Serving Communities Internship Program
- NewStream Farm Animal Care email service: Over 570 subscribers from across Canada

2014

- AFAC reconnects with youth and post-secondary students by visiting colleges and 4-H clubs
- AFAC increased the focus on connecting with consumers
- Consumer perceptions of animal health and welfare in Alberta” market research completed
- AFAC office moves to High River

2015

- Humane Handling Guidelines revised and distributed
- Hosted a number of training opportunities for members and industry
- AFAC governance structure officially changed
- The Livestock Care Conference cracks 200 attendees!
- AFAC presence (speaking, booths, etc.) expands across industry and across Alberta
- A 3-year industry-led compromised cattle benchmarking project begins
- AFAC strengthens our relationship with the National Farm Animal Care Council
- Visited a number of farms to learn more about current practices and gather footage for AFAC’s “Heart of a Farmer” video series


Thank you to the AFAC members, supporters, board, contractors
and staff for ensuring the success of our organization!

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