

LIVESTOCK WELFARE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

General Animal Welfare Results

The Livestock Welfare Engagement Project (LWEP) brought together input from a broad cross-section of livestock industry participants in Alberta, to provide an understanding of the livestock welfare landscape in the province from the industry's perspective.

The project was conducted primarily throughout 2018. Data was collected through an online survey and a series of in-person focus groups across Alberta. The majority of respondents were individuals, such as producers and farm employees.



This is a summary of industry information on animal welfare in general collected for the LWEP. The knowledge gathered through this project provides a resource to inform Alberta's ongoing understanding, activity and progress in this critical area.

The majority of all respondents agreed that animal welfare is growing in importance to Alberta's livestock industry and that it is a critical component of Alberta's agricultural competitiveness and market acceptance.

Many expressed that animal welfare has always been a priority. Some elaborated that animal welfare is also related to animal productivity and handling ease. Many felt that the industry has made significant improvements and that the work must continue.

Animal welfare is growing in importance to Alberta's livestock industry



Animal welfare is a critical component of Alberta's agricultural competitiveness and market acceptance



Respondents highlighted that there has been an increase in public awareness of animal welfare and in public demand to know where their food comes from. They recognized that retailers and marketers also have a growing interest. Alberta's livestock industry was seen as responding to this demand and leading the way.



However, some were unclear if animal welfare was a legitimate consumer driver. They felt that there was little evidence that consumers were changing their buying habits and expressed the opinion that consumers were more interested in price.

An issue raised was that the public is disconnected from the agricultural community and is unaware of current practices. To bridge this gap, respondents expressed the importance of informing the public, increasing the industry's transparency, and improving consumer understanding.



Social media, and media in general, were viewed as a significant influence on public perceptions. Many felt that the industry must compete with the misinformation spread through the media.

Poor actors in the industry were viewed as contributors to negative public perceptions and were not welcomed. It was expressed that there is a lack of, or an inconsistency in, enforcement to those that do not care for their animals appropriately. Also, some felt that over-regulation would restrict the industry in moving forward.



Assurance programs, the National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice, and commodity group efforts were seen as substantial contributors to welfare improvements. Some noted inconsistency in their implementation. The cost of changing an operation's practices was noted as a barrier to adoption.

