

Minister
of Agriculture and
Agri-Food



Ministre
de l'Agriculture et de
l'Agroalimentaire

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0C5

JUL 25 2017

Quote: 231340

Ms. Shanna Munro
President and Chief Executive Officer
Restaurants Canada
1155 Queen Street West
Toronto ON M6J 1J4

Dear Ms. Munro:

Thank you for your letter regarding Canada's animal welfare standards and concerns noted by Restaurants Canada's members. I regret the delay in this response.

The Government of Canada takes farm animal welfare very seriously. This is a shared responsibility that rests not only with the federal government but also with provincial and territorial governments, producers, transporters, industry organizations, and many others. The participation of the retail, food service, and restaurant sectors in the development of and support for national standards is particularly important for public trust.

I have engaged with many groups with respect to standards of care and the welfare of farm animals. A fundamental principle of Canada's approach is that national standards should be based on sound science and evidence. These standards should strike an appropriate balance that considers current research knowledge and the welfare needs of animals, while also taking into account international expectations, consumer demands, and practical needs for implementation. Achieving that balance requires effective collaboration. Therefore, I am pleased that Restaurants Canada is working with Chicken Farmers of Canada and other groups to support Canada's high standards of animal care and to ensure consistent messages.

The results of recent studies at the University of Guelph by Dr. von Massow have found that, although Canadians have shown an increased awareness of and interest in animal welfare issues, their level of knowledge has not progressed at the same rate. It is important that all stakeholders work together to ensure clarity and consistency of information to help raise awareness about how food is produced in Canada and how Canadian farmers care for their animals.

Canada has put in place an excellent system for developing and implementing national standards for the care and handling of farm animals. The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies initiated Canada's unique approach in 1980 and, since 2006, it has been revised and strengthened under the leadership of the National Farm Animal Care Council. This model ensures that the full range of stakeholders and other interested parties not only participate in the development of Codes of Practice for each species, but that they also agree by consensus to support the implementation of and adherence to the Codes.

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Canada

Canada is a leader in the development and implementation of high standards of farm animal care, and I am pleased that Canada's farmers are demonstrating their commitment to doing what is right. Participation in on-farm assessment programs is a key measure for assuring markets that national standards are being met. Given the complexity of farming operations across the country, each species is at different stages of developing and implementing its own national assurance program. Chicken Farmers of Canada is one of the farm federations that have fully implemented their program, with all their farms being audited annually to ensure compliance with Animal Care Program standards.

Dairy Farmers of Canada has also been a significant leader in ensuring quality animal care standards, having piloted both the revised Code development model and the Animal Care Assessment Framework. In fact, animal welfare is a key component of the dairy proAction initiative. The Canadian Pork Council was one of the earliest to implement an on-farm assessment program for animal care as part of its Canadian quality assurance certification, and both the turkey and egg industries have implemented similar on-farm programs. Finally, the beef feedlot sector announced the finalization of its assessment program, with many producers already engaged in implementing the requirements of this initiative.

It is in our shared interest to ensure that facts are at the centre of discussions around animal welfare. The Codes of Practice are Canada's national standards, developed by consensus through a broad-based collaborative effort and which serve as the basis for on-farm assessment and enforcement. Advocacy campaigns that otherwise attempt to put the industry in a negative light do not reflect the great job that is being done by Canadian farmers and many others who work to ensure the welfare of farmed animals.

Public trust issues such as animal welfare will be an important part of the agricultural policy framework to which the federal, provincial, and territorial governments are committed. Canadians can obtain further information by visiting the websites of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

I trust that this information will be of assistance to you. Again, thank you for writing to me on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lawrence MacAulay".

Lawrence MacAulay, PC, MP