



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri- Food

AGRI • NUMBER 083 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Merv Tweed

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, May 28, 2013

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, meeting number 83.

Orders of the day are pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, January 31, 2013, a study of agricultural and agrifood products supply chain (animal welfare).

Joining us today as witnesses are Mr. K. Robin Horel, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council; Tim Lambert, chief executive officer of the Egg Farmers of Canada; and Jacqueline Wepruk, general manager, and Edouard Asnong, chair, of the National Farm Animal Care Council.

Committee members, I want to advise you that you have an English copy of the presentation that we're going to hear. There was a translated copy sent to you by e-mail yesterday. You may or may not have printed it. When we get into the presentation there's a graph in colour that they will use, but you're going to see it in black and white. I'm just giving everyone a heads-up.

With that we'll start with Mr. Horel.

Welcome and please proceed.

Mr. K. Robin Horel (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning. My name is Robin Horel and I'm the president and CEO of the Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council.

Thank you for the invitation to provide to the committee and other interested parties CPEPC's perspectives on industry and government initiatives for animal welfare.

Our council is the national trade organization for Canadian chicken and turkey processors, hatcheries, egg graders, and egg processors. We're now in our 63rd year. Our council has member companies in every province of Canada.

In addition to representing the interests of more than 170 Canadian poultry processors, egg processors, and hatcheries, our membership also includes over 50 national and international industry partners who have joined us as associate members.

Representing some of the largest agrifood corporations in Canada, our member companies process over 90% of Canada's chicken, turkey, eggs, and hatching eggs. This economic activity generates

over \$5 billion in annual retail sales. To accomplish this, our members have invested over \$1.5 billion in plants and equipment, and directly employ more than 20,000 Canadian workers.

The Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council has identified as a strategic priority continuing to build on the trust with customers and consumers through the implementation of effective animal welfare initiatives.

The Canadian poultry industry is committed to providing animal care of the highest possible standard.

The production of hatching eggs, chicken, turkey, and eggs is controlled in Canada under supply management. The national producer agencies play a key role in ensuring that their members comply with animal welfare guidelines set forth in the codes of practice and government regulations.

The codes of practice are the foundation of Canada's farm animal welfare system. The existing codes of practice for poultry meat and egg-laying birds are only 10 years old, and are already being reviewed and updated using the National Farm Animal Care Council process. The codes are produced using the most up-to-date science available, and they reflect societal values.

The poultry and egg industries are among the few that also have animal care assessment programs. The animal care program ensures that what is in the codes is in fact what is being practised on the farms. They allow industry to prove that what we say matches with what we do.

You'll be hearing from witnesses from the National Farm Animal Care Council and from the producer agencies for poultry and eggs during this week of testimony, so I'll leave it to them to discuss the details of both the codes and the animal care assessment programs.

Before leaving the subject of NFACC, the National Farm Animal Care Council, I wish to make a few additional comments. This organization is unique in the world. I'm proud to serve on the council as the representative of the poultry processing industry. I'm currently NFACC's vice-chair.

This uniquely made-in-Canada organization is composed of virtually all of Canada's poultry and livestock associations, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, processors, retail and food service customers, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, researchers, provincial groups, and government.

When you have this diverse group of people who are dedicated to ensuring and improving animal welfare sitting around the same table, you can accomplish a lot. In our opinion, the only way to truly address animal welfare is to bring all the pieces of the puzzle together.

I'll now move downstream from the farm gate, because as you've correctly identified, animal welfare is a supply chain responsibility.

Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council was a driving force behind the creation of a document entitled "Recommended Best Practices for Bird Care in the Canadian Poultry Supply Chain from Farmer to Processor". The document was the result of two years of work with our supply chain partners.

Unveiled in April 2012, it outlines welfare obligations for each—the farmer, catcher, transporter, and processor—based on industry knowledge, current practice, and existing programs. It explains what CFIA expects of processors, who in turn have expectations for their transporters, catchers, and farmers.

The document is expected to be reviewed regularly. A new version was released and distributed throughout the industry in January 2013. The document includes a decision tree to assist farmers, catchers, and truckers in assessing flocks to ensure that birds are fit to load.

Recently CFIA released a related document to CPEPC for consultation, the compromised poultry policy. We surveyed our industry, and we recently submitted written comments to CFIA. We have a scheduled follow-up meeting with them in late July.

CPEPC and many other stakeholders have invested in the Canadian livestock transportation certification program. This live-stock training program, originating in Alberta, is the choice training program for many CPEPC member companies for their drivers.

In August 2012, with the assistance of government and industry funding, a project manager was hired and CLT began to reinvent itself, the goal being to create a web-based recertification program using updated versions of existing course material for each species.

• (1110)

CFIA monitors transportation and inspects the birds arriving at our processing plants. We work closely with them to ensure that inspectors and plant management have a common understanding of requirements. For the past year we have consulted with them on the issue of commercial poultry transport welfare.

A compliance verification system task has been developed and is currently being rolled out across the country by CFIA inspectors at the processing plants. The biggest issue for industry in the past has been the development of poultry regulations that have been based on red meat programs, and the inconsistent application of requirements in the field.

In addition, industry has been waiting for a number of years for the new health of animals regulations dealing with transportation of animals. The poultry industry has for some time not had visibility into what is contained in the new transportation regulations. We will need an opportunity to consult again on the proposed final regulations and will want assurance that the differences between

species, for example, between poultry and cattle, or hogs, have been recognized.

We understand from CFIA that the process of modernization of these regulations remains a priority for the agency and that the proposed changes will be published in *Canada Gazette* part I for formal consultation before they are finalized.

Humane slaughter is an activity directly within the control of CPEPC's poultry processing member companies. We take our responsibility to minimize stress and avoidable suffering for poultry seriously. In addition to complying with the applicable guidelines in the code, CPEPC member companies also fully comply with Canadian Food Inspection Agency regulations as prescribed in the manual of procedures. Later this year we expect CFIA to release their new chapter in the "Meat Hygiene Manual of Procedures" on animal welfare requirements. Direct agency oversight of the slaughter process is the public's assurance that humane procedures are being followed in our plants.

Given the importance of animal welfare in the livestock and poultry industry, we undertook to host a poultry and red meat technical symposium on the subject in conjunction with the Canadian Meat Council in the fall of 2012.

CPEPC and the Meat Council and CFIA presented a day and a half of welfare education that included presentations from CFIA officials, producer agencies, transport, processing, retail food service, academia, and auditors. It included representation from the U.S. and Spain. Attendance was over capacity. Attendees were pleased with the content and the quality of the presentations.

The national groups that represent producers of chicken, turkey, eggs, and hatching eggs formed, along with us, CPEPC, in December 2001 an organization called the Canadian Poultry Research Council, CPRC. The creation of this council followed the recommendation of a report commissioned by the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council and the Canadian branch of the World's Poultry Science Association.

The goals of CPRC include coordinating and enhancing a more efficient Canadian poultry research effort and facilitating the establishment of national poultry research priorities. CPRC's research objectives include meeting consumer expectations as to the way poultry is raised and delivered to them as a nutritious food.

One of the ways industry has stepped up to the plate and responded to these consumer expectations is by funding the Poultry Welfare Centre. The recent announcement of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada staff changes and the cessation of AAFC poultry research will have a negative impact upon poultry research in Canada generally and upon the future of the Poultry Welfare Centre specifically.

To conclude, the key messages that I've tried to outline in my presentation to members of the standing committee today include the following:

Animal welfare is important to our industry and to my member companies. We invest in it; we invest time and money.

The supply-managed nature of the poultry and egg industries in Canada helps facilitate our ability to manage this issue. It is a supply chain issue. Genetics companies, farmers, transporters, and processors all have a role to play.

Collaboration is key not only through the poultry supply chain, as I just noted, but throughout all of animal agriculture, and the structure and the work of NFACC is witness to that collaboration.

We measure results; our customers audit; CFIA provides oversight; and our member companies measure and manage this area of their businesses.

Research is one of the keys to continually adapting and improving practices.

CPEPC and our member companies are proud to participate in a supply chain that provides Canadian consumers with wholesome products while respecting responsible and humane practices for animal care. We will continue to support industry initiatives and research into improved animal husbandry methods in the future.

• (1115)

The result is a supply of safe and nutritious food derived from animals raised in accordance with excellent husbandry practices.

Thank you very much for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lambert.

Mr. Tim Lambert (Chief Executive Officer, Egg Farmers of Canada): Thank you very much.

My name is Tim Lambert. I'm the chief executive officer of Egg Farmers of Canada. I appreciate the opportunity to address the group. I'm glad to see this on the agenda of the committee. This is a really important issue for our industry, one which I would suggest is not well understood by the public. Therefore, I think there's a lot of value in the dialogue you're having on this.

By way of background, we represent the 1,000 regulated egg farmers across the country. A point I want to make to the committee

is that we represent conventional cage producers, organic producers, free-run, free-range, brown egg producers, and omega-3 producers—the whole gamut. It really puts us at somewhat of a disadvantage in the public dialogue with animal rights groups because simply put, we're not going to go out publicly and point out any disadvantages and strengths of the different systems. We don't want to be seen criticizing different production systems. The activists tend to take a one-sided view that all cages are bad for layer production. That's a really inaccurate portrayal of the reality of the situation, so I'd like to speak to that a bit today.

I'd also note that unlike most trade associations, Egg Farmers of Canada has some regulatory and operational responsibilities. For example, we buy and sell all the eggs that get used by processing companies and we negotiate directly with them on behalf of producers. We're very much involved in the commerce within the industry. As part of that regulatory responsibility, we operate an on-farm food safety program called Start Clean Stay Clean, which is HACCP, hazard analysis and critical control point, based and has been reviewed technically by CFIA. I don't want to spend any real time on that today, the subject being animal welfare, but I did want to note that for the committee's attention.

Of particular interest today is that we operate an on-farm animal welfare program as well. It is based on codes of practice that were developed in conjunction with scientists, producers, and the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. We have a scientific advisory panel that oversees that process for us. Through NFACC we're in the process of reviewing those codes as we speak.

Why then is hen welfare an issue? It's because we have science-based systems in place. A key point that gets lost in some of the debate is that birds that aren't healthy aren't happy and they aren't productive. Farmers have very much a vested interest in the welfare of their birds to ensure that they're productive. I'd like to tell you that the issue is black and white, but that's not true at all.

I've been meeting with Canadian retailers across the country. Last week I was meeting with Sobeys in Toronto. I've been out west to meet with the Overwaitea and Save-On-Foods group. I've also met with Loblaws and Tim Hortons. What I said to them is that ultimately we're going to supply the eggs that Canadians want to purchase regardless of the production system. We don't have a vested interest in which system it is, and there are pros and cons to each.

With respect to cage production, when birds are in cages, they're separated from their manure. When they're separated from their manure, there is a higher level of food safety with the birds. However, when birds are taken out of cages, they're in contact with their manure, and there will be challenges with disease, internal parasites, and mites. Because they're on the floor, there can be challenges with bone breakage. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to most people, but I'll say it in front of this committee, hens are cannibalistic. If they're in too large a group, managing their tendency to become territorial and attack each other is a challenge. That's a significant animal welfare challenge.

• (1120)

As an anecdote, I was talking to an organic producer, and he had lost about 15% to 20% of his flock. Other producers on our board were asking if that was because of disease in his flock. He said that no, it was cannibalism. That's something not widely understood. I think the committee would appreciate why it's not something we go speak a great deal about publicly.

What cages don't do—and if you look at the left side of the page—is that they don't allow the birds the opportunity to perch, which is a natural behaviour, to forage, to dust bathe, and to use a nesting box.

In the middle column you'll see reference to “enriched”. By enriched cages, we mean colony systems. They hold about 60 birds. In them are perches. In them is an area where they can scratch. In that system are perch areas.

We think that over time our industry will migrate to that type of system. That is where Europe has gone, at 116 square inches per hen. It has a ban on conventional cages which started in 2012, but it does allow for enriched housing systems.

The U.S. has an agreement with the Humane Society of the United States. They're working on getting that passed into law. It too would allow for the use of enriched cages.

What we're doing here in Canada is extensive. We're doing a lot of research. You'll hear later, I think, from Dr. Tina Widowski. We sponsor a chair in animal welfare at the University of Guelph and it's held by Dr. Widowski. We are undergoing our review of codes of practice, which I referred to. We're continuing to do our research into that system as a possible alternative down the road.

We're also involved very actively internationally. We're part of a group called the International Egg Commission. I serve as the chair of the animal welfare working group. We're also involved with the World Organisation for Animal Health, or OIE. A Canadian veterinarian, Dr. Vincent Guyonnet, is on the working group establishing layer welfare standards for the OIE.

We're involved domestically, involved with the U.S., and involved with Europe and other countries as well.

As this process unfolds, you can be assured that all regulated production is currently conducted using the very best accepted scientific information. We are continually building and applying the new information we get. We will continue to take every step possible to continue to build a world-class industry. We take great pride in that culture of continuous improvement.

Thank you for your kind attention.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Wepruk, please go ahead.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk (General Manager, National Farm Animal Care Council): I will be first and Edouard will finish the presentation.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Jackie Wepruk. I am the general manager of the National Farm Animal Care Council.

Thank you very much for the invitation today to provide the committee and other interested parties with the perspective of the National Farm Animal Care Council, or NFACC, on issues around animal welfare.

I'll begin with an orientation to the National Farm Animal Care Council and its processes. NFACC's chair, Edouard Asnong, will then deliver his perspective as chair.

Canadian agriculture, allied and downstream industries and governments are increasingly being challenged relative to how farm animals are cared for. Canadian food companies view animal welfare as a critical part of their sustainability agenda. Animal welfare has become a global issue recognized by corporations, development agencies, trade agreements, and even financial institutions. International developments are shaping the global agenda, with potential implications for Canadian farmers.

NFACC is a collaborative partnership of diverse Canadian stakeholders engaged in meaningful processes that address these farm animal welfare challenges. Our partners include virtually all the national livestock and poultry associations, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, and many others. Governments, both federal and provincial, are also represented on the council. Our associate members include Loblaws, Sobeys, and Tim Hortons.

These diverse groups have come together under the NFACC umbrella to deliver an innovative science-informed approach to farm animal welfare that meets both market and societal expectations. NFACC members are committed to real progress on farm animal welfare while maintaining the viability of Canadian farmers and allied businesses to market their products domestically and globally.

NFACC has three primary focus areas: overseeing the development of national codes of practice for the care and handling of farm animals; overseeing the development of a national framework for animal care assessment programs; and developing and facilitating information sharing and communication.

Codes of practice are our national understanding of farm animal care requirements and recommended practices. They are produced through a rigorous development process which takes into account the best science available for each species. Codes are practical, informed by science, and reflect societal values. It's a balance that enables implementation, enhances credibility, and builds trust.

An unprecedented eight codes have been under development since 2010, with six to be completed by the end of 2013. New mink and farmed-fox codes have just been released, and a new equine code will be released in early June, with an updated beef cattle code released by August. The draft pig code will be released for public comment on Saturday, June 1, followed by a draft sheep code for public comment. The two poultry codes are also under development, one for meat birds and the other for layers. The dairy code was updated in 2009.

Project funding through the advancing Canadian agriculture and agri-food program, or ACAAF, and the Growing Forward programs has enabled the development of these codes. We are developing project applications for Growing Forward 2 that would enable us to finish the two poultry codes, along with developing or updating three additional codes. Project funding is our primary means for executing NFACC's processes.

Codes are a vital foundation, but alone they are not enough. In today's environment we all must be able to demonstrate that we are doing what we say we are doing.

NFACC's partners are developing an innovative animal care assessment model, ACAM, that dovetails with the codes to provide livestock and poultry sectors with a credible mechanism to prove that codes are being followed. A common national framework will provide Canada's livestock and poultry industries with a practical, economically feasible mechanism to maintain and strengthen their social licence with the public. It will also enhance our ability to collectively communicate to domestic and international markets about Canadian animal care assessment programs.

The ACAM is being test-piloted by the Dairy Farmers of Canada, who are in the process of developing a dairy animal care assessment program based on their code from 2009. This initiative has received project funding through Agriculture and Agri-Food's agricultural flexibility fund.

Animal welfare is an emotional topic. Feelings on the subject are personal and based on individual experiences, values, and circumstances. Productive dialogue can definitely be a challenge. NFACC facilitates this open dialogue that builds understanding and consensus among a variety of perspectives and positions. Science is used as the foundation to inform our deliberations relative to what is possible, how it is possible, and when it is possible.

● (1125)

We all share a common interest in supporting innovation in farm animal care and helping Canadian farmers to succeed. NFACC processes offer a meaningful yet cost-effective mechanism to achieve both.

I'll now pass the second part of our presentation to Mr. Edouard Asnong.

● (1130)

Mr. Edouard Asnong (Chair, National Farm Animal Care Council): Thank you, Jackie.

A small part of my presentation will be made in French.

Good morning. As Jackie has said, I am in fact chairman, as well as being a hog producer from Pike River, Quebec. I appreciate the invitation to provide the committee and other interested parties with NFACC's perspective on issues around animal welfare.

I have been in the hog industry since the mid-1970s and I have held several national and provincial positions on behalf of my industry. Today, however, I am speaking to you as NFACC's chair.

NFACC is seen as the go-to group for addressing animal welfare nationally and across sectors. The relationships have been cultivated among diverse groups that would not normally work together. This has created an environment of collaboration and trust that has been the cornerstone of NFACC's success. Farm animal welfare is being addressed in a way that individual organizations could not easily do on their own.

[*Translation*]

I accepted the chairman position because I am determined that this organization should have the future that it deserves. NFACC has survived and delivered results in spite of limited funding and human resources. I believe that NFACC supports those involved in the livestock and poultry sectors to meet the challenges faced around farm animal care issues and seize the opportunities that exist. Too often it is the people directly responsible for the care of animals whose practical knowledge is left out of the decision-making process.

We have an opportunity, through NFACC, to set the course relative to Canada's farm animal care and welfare system. Change is happening and it will continue to happen.

[*English*]

In the absence of NFACC's rigorous science-informed stakeholders engagement processes, there is a greater risk of having multiple or competing standards or regulations. This is likely to put farmers at a competitive disadvantage and provide questionable animal welfare improvements.

Stakeholders are using NFACC's processes to identify evidence-based practical solutions that address farm animal care concerns, meet market requirements, and can be implemented by farmers. However, if transitions are needed on farms, farmers alone cannot bear the burden of change.

Other stakeholders must be involved where transitions are at high cost and put farmers at a competitive disadvantage. Full engagement is needed from veterinarians, governments, animal welfare advocates, processors, the retail and food service sectors, and researchers. Everyone shares in the responsibility and must be part of the solution.

In many ways, NFACC is now a victim of its own success. We are being challenged by increasing demands with a limited resource base. While there is recognition of the value that NFACC brings, financial sustainability remains elusive. The future of NFACC depends upon strong financial support from its members and the government.

Jackie mentioned how science informs our deliberations at NFACC. We are concerned about recently announced cuts to agriculture and agrifood research, particularly in the area of animal welfare. Research and the resulting tech transfer are critical for the ongoing development of animal welfare initiatives in Canada.

We hope this streamlining effort will be rechannelled to support important animal welfare work being done at universities and centres of excellence across Canada. I hope you share with me a determination to ensure NFACC has the future it deserves within Canada's animal care and welfare system.

Thank you for the opportunity to present NFACC's perspective on this important topic.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madame Raynault.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Lambert, your document says that “In rare or special circumstances, hens that lay eggs may receive antibiotics approved by Health Canada, but only under the care of a veterinarian”. So it is not the producer who treats the sick animal.

It also says that “eggs produced by hens given antibiotics are not sent to the table egg market”. By “table eggs” do you mean only those eggs that are eaten at the consumer's table, or does that also refer to eggs that are used in the preparation of commercial cakes?

Can you provide us with further details on that?

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Tim Lambert: Certainly, and thank you for the question.

In fact, antibiotic use is very infrequent. It's not a normal part of egg layer production. That's for both the shell eggs and the processed eggs. Basically, of all the eggs that are produced, about 70% of them will go into the shell egg market, about 30% will go into the processed market, but all those are pasteurized when they're broken.

In any case—and given the time; I was trying to be conscious of that—there are other aspects to the whole debate on caged versus non-caged. By having the birds in cages, either enriched or conventional cages, where they're separated from the manure, that's part of why we very infrequently use antibiotics. When the birds are

on the ground and in contact with their manure, there is some risk of more disease.

There is no one system that is perfect. There are pros and cons to each, even with respect to environmental sustainability, which we haven't talked about. Layer production in cages is one of the most efficient forms of animal agriculture there is in terms of minimizing impact on the environment. As you take birds out of cages, you need more land, you have more challenges handling manure, and the environmental impact changes accordingly. There are a lot of puts and takes, but you are correct that antibiotic use is not common and is done under veterinary supervision if it is needed.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault: Fine. When hens are given free run, they are in contact with manure. How are the eggs cleaned in that case?

In principle, the egg that is laid by a cage hen is clean. But how does the producer clean dirty eggs?

[English]

Mr. Tim Lambert: When eggs are gathered, all eggs in the regulated system go to a CFIA certified grading station and all eggs are refrigerated. They're all washed, graded, and then packaged. Cleaning the eggs is part of the process.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Raynault: Very well.

Nine American states have now prohibited the use of gestation stalls on hog farms. Half of our animal production is destined for export. A growing number of our main economic and trade partners are eliminating gestation stalls.

In your opinion, if Canada does not take similar steps, could that have an adverse effect on our trade and on the sale of the animals we export?

Mr. Edouard Asnong: I expect the question is addressed to me, since I am the only pork production representative. However, I am not the official pork production representative; the Canadian Pork Council should really answer that question.

It is true that certain countries want us to adopt their standards. Among these are the countries of Oceania, and the European countries will follow once we sign a free trade agreement with them.

Moreover, the Canadian Pork Council, under the auspices of the National Farm Animal Care Council, is currently revising the code, and it will reach the prepublication phase on Saturday. These questions will be answered in the information that will be presented at the public review.

Although I am no longer a member of the committee, I cannot say more, because we have been asked to keep these matters confidential. We do not want to trigger a prior debate before the actual debate on the matter is held.

Ms. Francine Raynault: I understand.

In your dealings with our trade partners, have you come up against problems due to the way farm animals are treated?

Who is asking that the animals be allowed to walk the floor rather than being caged? Is it the population? Is it the industry? Is this simply a trend? There are no mandatory measures, but what is causing the movement toward that practice?

• (1140)

Mr. Edouard Asnong: In my opinion, the answer will vary according to the person you put the question to. Producers are very concerned by the well-being of animals.

Back then it was precisely because of that concern that engineers, agronomists and veterinarians advised us to bring in gestation stalls, because they thought that the animals would be less aggressive and would receive better care.

Since then, the five animal rights were brought in, including freedom of movement and the freedom to be able to turn around. That did not exist when the gestation stalls were brought in.

Today, the general trend is based on common sense. In my opinion, we have to be proactive and move towards that, since consumers are going to be asking for it, increasingly.

As you no doubt know, members of the Retail Council of Canada announced a few weeks ago that they will be no longer be purchasing any hogs from farms that use gestation cages as of 2022. That is the general trend we are seeing.

At the same time, farmers must be given time to adapt. They must most of all be given funding, because these changes will entail enormous costs, and hog production is not a very lucrative endeavour at this time.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to everybody for coming today.

My questions are for Robin and Tim.

My parents grew up on farms, one in Manitoba and one in B.C. They had chickens, cows, and all that. One thing my parents taught me was that healthy animals produced more milk, better eggs and more of them.

I guess what most Canadians want to know when they get that egg, chicken, or whatever, that it's healthy at the point of production. Please confirm if there is an economic benefit to having a healthy animal at the time of production.

Mr. Tim Lambert: Certainly there is. That's a key aspect for anyone such as yourself who has experience on a farm. You know that the people involved in livestock agriculture are almost universally people who care about animals. That's why they do it. They are always concerned with the welfare and health of their birds and with keeping those birds healthy, safe, well fed, and appropriately watered. Managing disease is all part of the chain that ultimately leads to a safe, high-quality product for consumers. Absolutely there's an economic benefit to producers ensuring that the

birds, in the case of layers, are healthy and well cared for, regardless of which production system is used. That's part of why with our codes review we're looking at ensuring that our codes are the most current they can be for all forms of production, because ultimately there will be room for cages, non-cages, and enriched colony cages as well.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Let's talk about the meat side of the poultry business for a minute.

If you move down the supply chain to where my folks, the graders or the processors, pick up, not only is it economically advantageous for the farmer to make sure the birds are healthy and well-treated, but also once the product gets to the processing plant, it goes through inspection. Healthy birds go through and non-healthy birds don't go through. Birds that might have bruises, broken limbs, or any of that kind of stuff have to be trimmed, so there's simply less product, and the producer will get paid less. Also, my members will have taken the product halfway through the plant only to end up having to discard some portion of it. The benefits go all the way through the chain.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: That's what I wanted you to confirm, because I think there's a public misconception sometimes when we hear different terms such as "free range", and there's an assumption that is always a healthier option, and often it is. You say you represent all forms of production. It's one thing to understand that it's not only in the customers' best interest to have a healthy animal, it's also in your best interest as producers to produce a healthy animal. Once the public understands that it's not an adversarial thing and that we all want the same thing....

Tim, you explained the enriched system. Again, it's a bit of a teaching moment, too, to understand that one system isn't necessarily better than another, but the enriched seems to get the most out of it and seems to have the least harm to the animal, has a healthier animal, and has a better produced animal at the end of the day. Can you explain what that looks like? You did a little bit in your initial statement, but could you explain that system?

• (1145)

Mr. Tim Lambert: With the enriched or furnished cage system, what they've done is ask what the reasons were. If you go back far enough, birds weren't in any form of cage. They were on the ground. They actually came off the ground into cages as a way of managing disease, managing cannibalism, and ensuring that all birds got adequate feed and fresh water. There were strengths to that, but the compromise was space and some of these natural behaviours.

The design is effectively one of giant colonies. There are cages which hold about 60 birds, with probably double the amount of space per bird. Running the length of these long colony systems there are perches so the birds can perch. If you go back far enough, the commercial fowl we use go back to jungle fowl. Those birds instinctively will go up into the trees at night. That's the instinctive part. Birds prefer to come up off the ground at night and they'll perch. They're comfortable doing that.

Also, by choice, if they can, rather than just laying their eggs in the bottom of the cage, they would go to a secluded area they deem to be safe to lay an egg. There are these little strips of curtains that allow the birds to go into a private place to lay. You'll actually see the birds queuing up to lay their eggs, to get into this nest area.

The third natural behaviour is one I think Dr. Widowski will speak to, because she's done a ton of research into determining how much energy a bird will expend to engage in certain natural behaviours.

The other is scratching or dust bathing. There is a little rough-surfaced pad which the birds will scratch, and they'll put a little bit of feed on top of that.

On that chart, the reason some of these things show up in yellow and not green is that when you have this scratch area, you could get some manure buildup, so you could get some compromise on bird health. It's minimal, but it is a risk.

What they've tried to do is marry the strengths of different systems into one.

What the enriched or furnished colony cage still does not do is allow the birds to forage far and wide, as they would if they were free run or free range.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Valeriote.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you to the witnesses for coming today.

My first question is for Robin and Tim. Robin, you alluded to it, and Tim, I'd like your comments as well.

We're all aware that the industry has come a long way toward bettering animal welfare voluntarily, and I am glad to hear you speak of enriched...as opposed to cages, and the movement towards that, Tim.

However, we know that not everyone plays by those rules. There have been significant cuts to veterinarians before, and now to government researchers, scientists, and biologists at government farms and research stations, and universities across Canada. It's close to 700 in total, with the announcement two weeks ago. When we need greater research, we're getting less research.

In fact, Jacqueline, you referred to science-based policy. I'm beginning to think that it's becoming policy-based science. That's not my quote; that's from somebody else. I'm quite concerned.

I want to know from Robin and Tim, with lack of research, how will industry fill the gap, notably at places like the Canadian poultry welfare centre in Guelph, or the completion of the codes of conduct

that you talked about working on? Will this pose a difficulty for farmers?

I only have five minutes so I'm going to time you.

Mr. Tim Lambert: I'll start. You asked a question about farmers. Of course, any time you lose research capacity it has a negative impact, so the short answer is yes, that creates some challenges.

We are in the enviable position that we do have the resources to invest in research. We sponsor Dr. Widowski at the University of Guelph, for example, and we contribute to CPRC, the Canadian Poultry Research Council. We will use our resources as best we can to fill that gap.

● (1150)

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Would it have a negative impact?

Mr. Tim Lambert: We will try to mitigate it. Any time you lose research capacity it has a negative impact.

I also understand there is a lot of competition for resources. Ideally we have continued research, but we will fill the gap.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Robin, could you speak to it?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: I mentioned that along with Tim's group and the other poultry groups we are part of the Canadian Poultry Research Council. The council did write a letter to the minister outlining some of our concerns. The easy answer is yes, we have some concerns. Like Tim, we are in the midst of trying to figure out how we react and what we're going to do going forward. As I'm vice-chair of NFACC, it includes as we go forward at NFACC, and as you pointed out, as we use science as part of the process to develop the codes, how we are going to get the research science we need.

We are in the midst of trying to figure out what to do about it, but yes, it will have an impact.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Jacqueline and Edouard, we spoke before the meeting. You responded emphatically to something I said. I was quoting from a Library of Parliament document that I have, "Codes of practice remain voluntary and are intended to promote sound management and welfare practices."

The National Farm Animal Care Council recommends its voluntary national technical guidelines be reviewed every five years. Codes such as those for animal transport appear to have been unrevised for quite some time, I think about 12 years. I'm curious why it takes so long. I'd like you to tell me how many times in the last 12 years they were reviewed and what resulted in the lack of revision. Could you comment on the use of the term "voluntary"? Why does it take so long to revise these codes so they're up to date? Why are they not keeping pace with those in other countries? I've read that New Zealand and Australia are getting rid of gestation cages, that McDonald's, Tim Hortons, Safeway, Wendy's, Burger King, and others want the cessation of gestation cages. Tim talked about the United States moving from battery cages to enriched spaces.

Could you answer those three questions?

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: Do I have his five minutes to do it?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: All right.

Around the National Farm Animal Care Council table we very purposely have had this conversation about whether codes are voluntary any longer. If you look at the modern codes, codes that have been developed through the National Farm Animal Care Council, you don't see that word. They're called codes of practice and they do contain requirements and recommended practices. Certainly recommended practices are voluntary. The requirements refer to an industry expectation, whereby industry, or the collective that sits around the code development committee, has said this is no longer acceptable and so thou shalt not, but they also can refer to regulatory requirements themselves.

In addition, a number of our provinces are referencing the codes of practice in their provincial animal protection legislation. Manitoba is one example of a province that uses the codes in its animal protection activities. Newfoundland is probably the most recent one that's also done that.

Talking about their being optional in any way, increasingly that's less and less the case. Plus, as both Robin and Tim have pointed out, a number of commodity groups have developed animal care assessment programs, and they are making some of those programs mandatory. They're basing them on their codes and saying you have to follow your code to market your product.

Those are the reasons we say it's not accurate any longer to refer to them as voluntary codes of practice, because efforts are increasingly under way to make them less and less so. The point is that these are a national understanding of what we expect around animal care requirements and recommended practices. To build that common understanding and to make sure that all the different users of the code are using the code in the same way, we have to make sure that everyone understands what's expected and what might be optional in the recommended practices.

The Chair: Thank you. I'll have to stop you there. I'm sorry.

Mr. Lemieux.

•(1155)

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: Two more questions are unanswered. Does someone else want to ask them?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): I'll answer them. As my colleagues know, Chair, I have all the answers.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: First of all, thanks for being here.

I'm very glad that there was some discussion about the vested interest farmers have in the care of their animals. That's really important because sometimes this discussion gets polarized immediately, that somehow farmers are against animal welfare when in fact the animals, their livestock, particularly when it comes to birds, are their living. They very much have a vested interest in caring for their birds and livestock.

I do have a question about how your three organizations communicate with the public. For example, I know that the National Farm Animal Care Council exists, but I would bet that the average Canadian doesn't know that. I know many of the details that are contained in the table. For example, moving the birds off the ground reduces the incidence of mites and bone breakage. It removes feces because it just falls through the cage and is taken away for further processing.

When there are organizations or people who are very concerned about animal welfare, they may pick some isolated examples, but they move right into the public realm and they interface with the public on a very emotional level. You've got very well organized groups, and you definitely have communication tools at your disposal. Do you see value in your organizations also communicating directly with the public to counteract some of this?

I think there are two scenarios being painted for the public. One is being painted that somehow farmers aren't caring for their animals properly, and on the other side, there's not much.

Could you comment on that?

Mr. Tim Lambert: What we have done so far is we've focused more on retailers.

We find on the layer side that we aren't getting a ton of pressure yet from broadly stated consumer groups. We get a lot of pressure from activist groups.

Together, Robin and I often go out and meet with retailers. The presentation I give to them is similar to the one I presented here. I talk about pros and cons, and the potential cost and disease management implications. We see that the retailers have started to move a fairly modest 1% of their production to be sourced from alternative forms of housing. Tim Hortons is an example. They are not necessarily going to free run or free range. We've chosen to engage the retailers more. There is a challenge in engaging directly with the public because, as I said at the beginning, we represent all forms of production and I don't really want to go out and say that birds are cannibalistic. I'll say things to a group like this and to retailers that I'm leery about saying publicly.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: There is, of course, messaging that you have to decide you want to communicate to the consumer.

Activist groups are talking to the consumer. The consumer is talking to the retailer but not necessarily with you. The retailer then makes a huge policy change that actually impacts your farmers, when in fact animal welfare is at the core of what you do, but it's just that it wasn't known, it wasn't defended, and now a big policy change has been driven through by your retailers.

I think plugging into retailers is good, but I'm concerned that the public is not hearing the good animal welfare story we have to tell, particularly here in Canada. Instead, they are hearing activist groups which are using isolated examples.

I think if we juxtaposed a number in terms of how many birds lay eggs in Canada every year against an isolated incident that is perhaps used by a group to promote what it is they want to get across, it would be way out of whack.

We have a good animal welfare story to tell, but I think it has to get out to the public because it's the public that they're targeting. Working with retailers is good, but I'm also encouraging working with the public.

Robin, could I quickly hear from you on that?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: I don't want to take too much time because I think you also need to hear from the NFACC folks.

From my organization's point of view, our outreach is to our customers, whether it be to Egg Farmers of Canada on the egg side, or on the chicken and turkey side, we talk to the customers. We are also all members of NFACC, and one of the reasons we are members is to do the things we talked about: produce the codes, make sure we're consultative, make sure we're collaborative, but also to start working on messaging from an animal welfare perspective.

That's my lead in. Edouard, it's your turn.

● (1200)

Mr. Edouard Asnong: Thank you for that question. Certainly the NFACC at our level, we don't talk about specific commodities. That's up to the commodities. What we can promote and provide them as a tool is our credible system to review codes and maybe eventually benchmark the uptake and compliance with them.

Certainly because a code is credible—just look at the stakeholders around the table—and it's consensus based, I think we have a nice story to tell. I also have to tell you that we work on a very tiny budget.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Atamanenko.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Thank you very much for being here. I have a few specific questions. Ms. Wepruk, did you mention that the equine code will be reviewed in early June.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: It's going to be released. It's had its public comment period. It will be final and released in June.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Is there a current code?

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: Yes. It's from 1999, I believe.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: The reason I'm asking is there are a lot of people concerned about the state of horses bound for slaughter and some of the conditions. It's good we're going to have the code.

I have another question in regard to your organization, which I must say is pretty impressive with lots of members. Do the three SPCA members represent all of the SPCA organizations? Are they in Canada? Do you have any contact with other animal welfare organizations? Do you communicate with them even though they may not be part of your organization?

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: We have a coalition of SPCAs that are responsible for animal welfare enforcement in Canada. Collectively those three have come together to share a membership on NFACC. Certainly it's within their realm to expand their coalition if they so desire, but at this point it's those three.

Our primary organization we work with is the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies. One of the things when we're talking about animal welfare, we're talking about how farmers care for their animals, yet there's a public perception that they don't. Everyone looks at animal welfare very differently. As I said, it depends on where you're coming from, your experiences, what you value in terms of animal welfare. Animal welfare is a multi-faceted issue. It involves animal health. It involves—

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: I'm sorry, I'm going to be rude and stop you, but thank you.

My next question is for Mr. Lambert and Mr. Horel.

As you know, all of us here support the supply-managed sector; all political parties certainly do. You were talking about the structure in regard to animal welfare, and there seems to be a very strong infrastructure to ensure various policies take place. If somehow supply management were to be modified or if we were to get rid of supply management in Canada, would that have an impact on what you just spoke about today?

If you could, please briefly answer that.

Mr. Tim Lambert: It would absolutely have a very significant and damaging impact. The reality for supply-managed commodities is that because they're profitable for producers, they have the money to reinvest. They're quite willing to invest in on-farm food safety and animal welfare. We sponsor the research chair at the University of Guelph with Dr. Widowski. If we didn't have the resources to do that it wouldn't happen.

Another thing about supply management is it has existed for 40-some years now. We regard it very strongly as a social contract with Canadians. We don't wait to be legislated or pushed. If there's an issue we see, we take it very seriously and then take steps to address it.

I'll give a quick example on traceability. We've already moved ahead to be able to trace our product fully because we think it's the right thing to do, not because it's legislated.

• (1205)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: The reason I ask is there is an attack on supply management, whether it's from the taxpayers federation or independent business, I see articles in the little community newspapers in my riding. I'm wondering if we've made a strong effort to really point out that it's not just about farmers, it's about safety, it's about our whole food chain. That's really crucial for all of us to get behind.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: As I outlined at the start of my presentation, one of the things that my members—chicken processors, turkey processors, hatcheries, egg graders, egg processors—have in common is that they all buy their most significant raw material from supply-managed farmers. We support the system.

Over and above everything that Tim said, which is absolutely true, the other point I was trying to make is that in this case, supply management helps facilitate the animal welfare system. We know exactly where all the farms are. We know exactly how much production there is, whether it's hens or turkeys. There are rules in place. There are inspectors from the agencies that go out to do food safety. They can easily do animal welfare. It's why animal care assessment programs work so well.

Does that mean that pork, beef, sheep, and all those things will not have good animal welfare? No. But does that help in the supply-managed areas, the poultry area? Does that facilitate it? Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Payne.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming.

It was interesting to note that you're working on those codes of practice, so you can all probably jump in on all of the questions I will have on them. I can't recall now but I think it was Robin who said that they're starting to review the codes of practice and that this is the first time in 10 years. Is that correct?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Yes, but what I was trying to suggest was that 10 years is pretty quick, and in fact, Jackie and the group are reviewing a lot of codes that are a lot older. Our codes were, up until this new NFACC process, the most recent ones we had. They were from 2003. In 10 years to start going through all the science.... It will

be a two-year process to get through the codes, and in eight years we'll be doing it again. It is pretty quick.

Mr. LaVar Payne: It's just that when you said 10 years, that seemed to me to be a rather long period of time.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Sorry, I didn't make my point very well.

Mr. LaVar Payne: What about other countries and the European Union in terms of their practices? Is 10 years standard?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: I don't know.

Do you know, Jackie?

Mr. Edouard Asnong: My understanding is that it's an ongoing process in Europe. Every second year, they're voting changes or adapting the emphasis. Castration is the main topic now. It goes on and on.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: It's my understanding, and this is anecdotal from my understanding of the industry and internationally, that no one else has this sort of rigorous stem-to-stern process. Something may change with regard to castration in pigs or whatever is going on. It's stuff that doesn't have feathers, so I don't understand it. It's piecemeal, let's say.

In Canada we sit down; we get all the stakeholders; we get all the science; we look at the issues; we decide what needs to be done, and then we do it. We do the entire code, stem to stern. It's not piecemeal.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Tim.

Mr. Tim Lambert: Specifically in the layer sector, what happened in Europe was the science got subjugated to the emotion and it went directly from the activists into the political process. Legislation was passed throughout the European Union starting in countries like Holland and migrating to Germany, Austria and others and then gradually they moved it to this cage ban. It would take me a long time to articulate the turmoil that happened because it wasn't, as Robin, Jackie and Edouard have all said, a systematic organized structure that involved reviewing the science, having a group like NFACC work together, working with industry, and working as a partnership to move it ahead. They went at it, and it was a rodeo, and not a good one like the Calgary Stampede.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: From my point of view, something that Frank said early on about not science-informed policy but policy-informed science: I think that's what happened in Europe.

• (1210)

Mr. LaVar Payne: I agree. I think science has to be the basis of all of the determination. I'm making some assumptions that these codes will be an ongoing process and you might do one or two a year, whatever it happens to be, in order to get there.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: It's important to recognize that our codes are developed through project funding. Project funding is what it is. You have to put forward a project application. Our current project funding will end in December 2013. The two poultry codes will be in suspense while we wait to see whether in Growing Forward 2 the next round of project funding is accepted. We do not have a sustained code development process. We have a fantastic process that enables producers, animal welfare advocates, veterinarians, and governments—those who are using those codes—to have a voice as to what needs to be in those codes, but we don't have a sustained system beyond these five-year blocks of applying for project funding and then always having to make the argument that these aren't ongoing operational kinds of things.

It's always a bit of a balance to try to sustain that code process and then make sure we are reviewing them every five years and updating them every 10, that they are meeting market expectations, and that they are making the best use of the latest science.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Is the sole funding coming from government or the organizations?

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: The organizations contribute. We keep track of probably the tip of the iceberg of what the organizations contribute in terms of human resources. In the last count we had more than 20,000 hours of human resources going into the code development. There's cash that comes from government. I have to say that people who sit around that code development committee table.... You're going to be hearing from Tina on Thursday. She sits on three scientist committees. We have code fatigue right now, updating eight codes at once with individuals who—quite frankly, we can be really proud of the people who sit at those code committee tables because they have dedicated an enormous amount of time. There are people who are taking cancer treatments and still showing up at code committee meetings. It's quite remarkable the dedication of the people who put their time and effort into this, as well as their professional energy.

The Chair: I have to stop you there. I'm sorry.

Go ahead, Madame Brosseau.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank our witnesses.

This is a really interesting and important subject. Five minutes is not enough. I have so many questions, and papers scattered everywhere.

[*Translation*]

In my riding, in Mauricie, there is a farm that belongs to Jocelyn Brodeur and Christian Poirier. The business is called Porcs Mauricie and is located in Saint-Alexis-des-Monts. The owners realized that their animals' well-being was important to them, and they renovated their facilities accordingly. They are very proud of them, and I am proud for them. I think that that is the direction the pork industry is going to take. It is a very important industry in Quebec.

[*English*]

In Quebec and in my riding there is a lot of pork. A lot of farmers are getting to the point where they have to renovate their buildings.

In what direction are they going? Is there still construction being done for the gestation crates nowadays, or are they moving towards group housing?

Mr. Edouard Asnong: I don't know the answer to that question.

I think they are smart enough that they go to loose housing. Those who I'm hearing from are Ghislain—he is from the side of Sherbrooke and maybe he's the only one building group housing. I know that the Québec fédération is very supportive to move in that direction of loose housing.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: What are the benefits and consequences of group housing? Are there any benefits of group housing? What are the benefits of group housing as compared to sow

Mr. Edouard Asnong: The science report says that if it's well managed it can be more productive than gestation cells, but it has to be well managed. Producers are not used to managing sows in groups. They are used to managing and working with gestation cells. Actually, I have to admit producers do not see many benefits to it.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: There are not many benefits?

Mr. Edouard Asnong: There are for the future, the demand, and the attributes. Certainly, there are benefits for the animal, if it's well managed, of course.

● (1215)

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Could you comment on how Canada is right now when it comes to animal welfare as compared to other countries? How strong is our legislative framework for animal welfare?

Mr. Edouard Asnong: In general?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Yes.

Mr. Edouard Asnong: I will ask Jacqueline to answer that.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: The National Farm Animal Care Council really focuses on non-regulatory approaches to improving animal welfare. Most people want to do the right thing. In fact, there's science to show that education and good information extension is the number one way of ensuring that good animal welfare standards are in place. Regulations are really for those who refuse to follow through on what's expected. They are the safety net.

Where we really need to focus our energy is not on assuming people are not willing to look after their animals. They are. It's really about good information extension. That's one of the things the codes are all about; that is, getting that research that's been done.... We have world-renowned researchers in Canada. We need to get the work they've done into a format, like the codes, where it can be implemented and can be utilized. Then it goes even beyond that in terms of how you take that code and do further information extension about what's in the code, how it benefits producers, and how it can be implemented.

Then you have the animal care assessment programs, which are another way of ensuring that those codes are being followed. There are many options other than a regulatory approach to ensuring good animal welfare is in place. In fact, that's where you get the buy-in from people. None of us really likes to hear the siren and see the lights in our rear-view mirror. Certainly, if you can get people to understand why you need to follow the rules and the importance and value to them, that's a far better approach.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: I guess you would say that financial support, not just from the federal government but from provincial governments and industry, is very important for innovation research. It's something that needs to be maintained.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: Absolutely. Research is fundamental to what we do. It's fundamental to the conversations we have around the table with the different viewpoints there are in animal welfare. If your value in animal welfare is on health, or your value is on natural behaviour, you can use science to inform that conversation and help those different viewpoints come together and understand each other so that we can create common ground to move forward on. That's why we work with the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies.

The Chair: Thank you. I have to stop you there. I'm sorry.

Mr. Dreeshen.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you to our guests. It is an interesting discussion that we are having today.

I think part of the issue is that many consumers are so far removed from their agricultural base. Their main contact perhaps is with the petting zoo or whatever, which is probably the worst thing that could happen to animals.

I suppose I could go back to my own experiences. We had chickens that were free range, but you'd also look at what they were picking through, the bugs and everything else that they had. You did see the roosting; you saw that. You saw them going into their own little stalls so that they could nest. The eggs did not come out overly clean, so you were the one responsible for cleaning them. That's part of it, but that's the reality. I think when people look at it from the outside, they say, "Well, jeepers, how could you manage something like that? It has to be pristine." It's not really a reality, and then when people suggest, "Well, let's go back to that," I think there are a few issues that have to be taken into account.

The same thing goes for hog production. I remember our having the little A-frames that the hogs would go into. I suppose it looks very romantic that this would be the situation, but of course the reason for that was so the piglets could get over to the side so they wouldn't be crushed by the sow, which is the same situation as far as the gestation stall is concerned. You're looking at the cannibalistic nature that exists when you put a number of hogs together. They get bored; they start chewing on tails, and as soon as they get one down, you see what happens to it. The same thing happens with chickens.

When you look at it from the outside, as you talked about, there are the activists and the turmoil, and the explanations that are required when you don't get ahead of the messaging. I think that's

extremely significant. There are these realities that exist in all of these different commodity groups.

I'd like a quick comment on how you manage some of this turmoil, and how you look at it to make sure that people realize what the realities are.

Robin, I believe you spoke about the Canadian livestock transport certification program, and the web-based recertification process that was associated with each of your commodities, and the commodities have to end up being moved. I wonder if you could touch on some of those areas.

• (1220)

Mr. Tim Lambert: I'll start.

It is an interesting challenge, and I know Mr. Lemieux referenced it as well, getting ahead of the consumer view. What I find interesting in Canada, because of the amount of work we do in both the U.S. and Europe, the Canadian public is—I don't know if it's a Canadian thing—skeptical of extreme views. When they get a really strong message from the activist side, instinctively what we hear is they want to know what the other side of the story is.

One of the things we've done in our system is we have a producer and we have a couple of YouTube videos that are available and actually are bringing people, teachers, and others out to farms to show them what it's really like. We still find when we do focus group work that Canadian farmers have a high degree of credibility and trust with the Canadian public. That gives us a bit of a leg up, if you will, to get the other side of the story out. We match some work with consumers and we take on board your encouragement, from what I'm hearing, to do more of that, talking to the retailers as well, as we've referenced. We're in a better place than either Europe or the U.S., but obviously we have a lot of work to do for the reasons you've said.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Robin, could you speak on web-based recertification?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Sure.

I had written a note here. I was going to say the same thing. There is all kinds of research showing that Canadians trust farmers. On the hierarchy ladder, farmers are right up there with veterinarians. Processors are further down. People who work for processors, like me, aren't even on the ladder, I don't think. I haven't seen one with me on it.

I'm really proud of the Canadian system. I'm biased, and I'll state that I'm biased. What we seem to have developed, partly through NFACC, partly because of the culture, as Tim suggested, is our customers are in the tent with us. Our customers want to know the differences between the green column, the red column, and the yellow column. They want to understand the science. They have brands they have to protect. They're getting pressure from consumers, absolutely, but they want to do the right thing. They want to understand the science and they're in the tent with us.

As you said, consumers are further away from the farm, for sure. Consumers want to know more, but consumers also vote with their wallets. For example, in eggs, the percentage of regular versus omega-3, which is a health benefit and not an animal welfare benefit, versus free run, or free range, or organic...it just goes down and down and down. We have to take all that into account.

I like the Canadian system. I like the collaboration. I like that retail and food service customers aren't saying, "Effective next Monday, thou shalt do this." I like that it's science based, as you mentioned before. I think that's good.

As far as Canadian livestock transport, CLT, goes, it's not only for poultry. CLT was originally for cattle and hogs. We have found in the industry that it seems to be where everyone's gravitating. Hauling livestock, hauling live animals, hauling poultry is different from hauling logs and other freight. You need to have a training module that allows people to understand those differences and that measures them.

What I tried to do in my presentation was go through the supply chain. I started at the farm and went all the way through to the processing plant. Live haul in the middle is a critical component. Having something that's standardized is useful. It appears that CLT will become that standard.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Allen, go ahead.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Thank you very much.

It's fascinating.

Ms. Wepruk, earlier you wanted to talk about a particular issue, and it's one I want to talk to you about, that comes out of your report. You referred to it earlier. The chair, being as cruel as he is with the time, unfortunately, but with great kindness, had to cut you off.

It is this idea of what farmers do from an animal welfare perspective, which I would say they do very well. It's in their interest to do it really well. I think that Mr. Lambert, Mr. Horel, as well as Mr. Asnong have articulated that. They do treat their animals well. It makes sense to. It would not make sense to do the opposite, quite frankly. I don't want to be overly crass, but these are economic units, so if you want to prosper as a business, it doesn't do you well to mistreat those economic units. I recognize that's commodifying it, but I'm trying to make it make sense.

There's a distinction, and I think you started to talk about it earlier, between what farmers see and what consumers see as animal welfare. They're two different things that don't necessarily mesh well. Mr. Horel as much as said—and absolutely correctly, sir—that unfortunately, we're not on the ladder, either. I'm not sure if you and I, as a processor and a politician, are finding ourselves somewhere else. I wouldn't suggest where, but clearly we're not on that ladder, unfortunately. We need to work on that, you and I, about getting up that ladder.

Are you as an organization thinking about how to find that linkage of folks out there who are talking from an emotional context, sometimes from a knowledge context as well, about certain aspects? We'll use sow gestation crating as an example. I'm certainly not coming down on one side or the other. Their belief is that it's the

wrong way to treat a sow, that it should be different, and that there are reasons for that. Yes, I hear the other side of the argument, and Mr. Lambert put it very succinctly with his chart, which is bang on for the egg side. Thank you very much for that. Their belief is that we shouldn't do it that way, even with the other pieces.

That's the biggest group. We're the smaller group. I'm interested in some of your comments. I think you wanted to go down that road.

How do we work together in a collaborative fashion?

• (1225)

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: It's so fundamental to what the National Farm Animal Care Council is about. I refer to NFACC as being like a conflict resolution forum.

There was a question earlier which I never got to answer as to why it is taking so long to update these codes. In fact, it's only been in place since 2005. One of the fundamentals that we're based on is trust, and so for those groups that look at animal welfare differently, building that trust is a long-term exercise. We're all about relationships. It's from those relationships that we can actually have those conversations and find that common ground between what is right for animal welfare and how we are going to resolve some of our differences and what the middle ground is. Sometimes we may have to agree to disagree, but we can always be moving the bar forward.

One of the things that gets me really excited is when I see my Canadian Federation of Humane Societies representative sitting beside the cattlemen rep and they're having a good old conversation about what's important to animal welfare, or they're talking about their kids or whatever. Those relationships are really important because when an issue does arise, who's my CFHS representative calling? He's calling my cattlemen rep directly to get the real information on what's going on versus going off and doing a press release. It's that communication. It's about working through to the solution so that it doesn't become a public issue.

Yes, we need to do better outreach to the public, but most of our effort is very internal in terms of making sure that we're resolving things so they don't become public issues, so that the government isn't dealing with them as public issues.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: You talked about your funding model being this project piece, which we all know means reapplying and keeping fingers crossed that it's written really well this time. Is the priority still there? Has it drifted away?

My own personal view is you need sustained funding because actually, this won't go away. This is a 20-year project, in my view, if you want to take it down the road.

I see Mr. Lambert indicating that he wants to speak to that issue. Feel free, either one, to talk about what the funding model should look like as far as where we take this piece down the road, because the trust piece takes a long time to develop. It doesn't happen in a year. It doesn't happen because I got invited to a round table on a couple of occasions and got to sit beside a certain person and we talked about our kids playing soccer in the summer. Isn't that right? It takes a whole lot of time to do that and players change.

How do you see this developing over the longer term? What would your recommendation be on what we need to do, as a committee, as far as making a recommendation—because we are going to make a recommendation about this—about how this organization should go forward and what kind of funding it should look at?

Mr. Lambert, I think you wanted to comment.

• (1230)

The Chair: Before you comment, I'm going to give you about 20 seconds each to make a comment, and then I have to go to another member.

Mr. Tim Lambert: I'll be quick. It speaks actually to a question which Mr. Payne asked.

There is value in continued financial support from government for this process because it's seen more objectively than if industry pays for it all themselves. You lose a certain third party credibility. Yes, industry should pay, and we do, but there is value in government involvement financially.

Jacqueline.

Ms. Jacqueline Wepruk: Thanks, that's really helpful.

It's about a partnership. Certainly we would like to have that conversation more openly around what is the breakdown between what NFACC members are going to be contributing and the value of their contributions. There are tremendous contributions by each organization, but certainly we are seen as this kind of credible third party, and the government funding is very important for the codes development, the animal care assessment model portion of it. NFACC members keep the operations going around NFACC, but certainly all these active codes of practice definitely need more sustained support.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Richards, for a final comment.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for being here today. I've enjoyed listening to your presentations and your responses to the questions you've had so far.

I have a couple of questions. My first question is for you, Mr. Horel, from the Poultry and Egg Processors Council. You're going to be out in my beautiful part of the world, in Banff, in my constituency, next month for your convention. It's a great place to have a convention, let me tell you. You've picked just the right place, for sure.

I understand at that convention you're going to be having a session on animal welfare, and some of the representatives who will be speaking at that session will include the National Farm Animal Care

Council and the Retail Council of Canada. I think even Tim Hortons is going to be on your panel as well. Obviously, I would like to commend you for having a panel on that particular topic. It's great that you're showing that animal welfare is really important to your industry by doing so.

Can you tell me a little more about that session? What will be discussed there and what are the objectives? What do you hope to achieve with that session?

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Thanks. I wish my members were as attentive to my program as you are. That's terrific. Thank you very much. I really appreciate that.

I've talked with Jackie, of course, who will be one of the presenters. I've talked with Al and I've talked with Tim. The idea in my mind is I'd really like to generate a discussion. There will be some presentations. Jackie will give a lot of the update as to what we've been doing for the last number of years, where we are, particularly with the poultry codes because that's what's important to my guys, and where we're going with the animal care assessment model, all that kind of stuff. But I really want my members to hear from our customers, one representing grocery retail and one representing a big food service company, on what's important to them from an animal welfare point of view.

I have these conversations with them a lot. I'd like my members to hear it as well. What's important regarding protecting the brand? What am I hearing from consumers? Why do I believe in the National Farm Animal Care Council process? What do I need from you, the suppliers?

I'm hoping that after about 45 minutes of presentations—Jackie, you only have 15; that's all you get—between the three, we can have a good, long chunk of discussion about where we're going, why we're going there, and whether we do it together.

I'll let you know in four weeks how it went. I'm looking forward to it. I think it should be one of the best sessions.

• (1235)

Mr. Blake Richards: That's great. Please do let us know how it goes. What I'm hearing there is you want to give a chance to producers and farmers to hear what the industry expects and wants to see. That's really what you're saying.

Mr. K. Robin Horel: Farmers, yes, but remember, my members are one step down the supply chain from the farmers. My guys are the egg graders, the egg processors. Farmers are going to be there too, but we're all going to hear it together. It's the full supply chain.

Mr. Blake Richards: Excellent. That's great. I'm glad to hear that.

I have one question as well for you, Mr. Lambert, from the Egg Farmers. I understand that about two years ago you funded the Egg Farmers of Canada chair in poultry welfare. It runs until January 2017. Could you tell me a little bit about that program, why you chose to fund it? What is some of the research being done through that?

Mr. Tim Lambert: Actually, we are sponsoring a network of research chairs across the country. We have a chair in agricultural economics at Laval, Dr. Maurice Doyon. We have the welfare chair with Dr. Tina Widowski at the University of Guelph. We're looking at a chair in human nutrition in Manitoba, and we have a couple of ideas, one in public policy and another in environmental sustainability. We do that because we think preparing for the future and investing in research is critical to our future. That was the idea behind it.

We don't want to manage or control. We want Dr. Widowski to be a completely independent researcher, and she is. She is doing research into different types of housing systems: enriched, at different sizes, cage-free, an aviary-type system, which I haven't talked about. She does research into bird behaviour around welfare as well. She is connected with fellow scientists in Europe and the U. S. I know, for example, about a month ago she was in Germany.

Our idea is to have somebody independent who will tell us not what we want to hear necessarily, but what we need to hear. We think we have the right person in Dr. Widowski.

The Chair: I have to end it there. Thank you.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I know Blake was still trying to work on an invitation to that meeting in his riding. Thank you for being here.

The one comment I'll make, and it's not necessarily the feeling of the committee, is that according to what I'm seeing and hearing across the world, a small number of people can make life very difficult for the animal producer. Your fight must be constant. I wish you luck in that because it is a huge challenge. We know you do a good job of what you do, and that is to produce safe food.

Thank you very much. I'll advise the committee that Thursday's meeting is in room 7-52 of this building.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>