

Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Study on Bill C-205 An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act

May 7, 2021

About Egg Farmers of Canada

Egg Farmers of Canada manages the national egg supply and promotes egg consumption while representing the interests of all regulated egg farmers. Over 1,200 egg farms across Canada, located in every province and in the Northwest Territories, deliver the fresh, local eggs that Canadians want and enjoy. Our farmers care for 26.57 million hens and produce 789 million dozen eggs per year. Canada's egg farming sector contributes \$1.3 billion to Canada's GDP, delivers \$307 million in tax revenue and supports over 18,500 jobs.

Support for Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act

We appreciate the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food's dedication in underlining the important work of farmers in delivering a reliable and safe food supply to our communities—today and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While farmers have a critical part to play when it comes to feeding our country, they also face a unique set of pressures and stressors when it comes to the role they take on in our food system. This is why we are writing you today to express Egg Farmers of Canada's support for Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act. The bill seeks to introduce amendments to help safeguard the biosecurity of Canadian farms, our national food supply and offer support to rural farming communities across our country.

Egg farmers follow rigorous food safety standards and requirements

Canada's more than 1,200 egg farmers and farm families follow comprehensive food safety standards, which include strict biosecurity measures, through our national Start Clean-Stay Clean® program. This rigorous on-farm food safety program draws on an internationally accepted approach to prevent, reduce or eliminate food safety hazards. The program identifies biological, chemical and physical hazards at egg farms and includes a range of critical control methods and management protocols that all regulated egg farmers must follow. The Start Clean-Stay Clean® program has been in place for nearly three decades. It was developed with input from leading food safety experts and regulators, and is reviewed on a semi-annual basis to ensure alignment with the latest scientific information and best practices. What's more, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has acknowledged the program as being technically sound.

As part of our national commitment to upholding already high food safety standards, all regulated egg farms are inspected against the program's requirements on an annual basis. This approach ensures accountability and a consistent application of the program requirements at all egg farms across the country. In fact, farmers must pass their Start Clean-Stay Clean® program audit and meet these standards in order for their eggs to be sold at stores or restaurants.

Biosecurity is central to our protocols

Part of the requirements of our Start Clean-Stay Clean® program include strict biosecurity protocols that divide space inside and outside the barn into restricted and unrestricted access zones to protect the flock of hens from pathogens and diseases such as avian influenza, Newcastle Disease and *Salmonella*.

Restricted zones are where access is limited and strict biosecurity is enforced; this includes the area where the hens live, for example. Anyone entering the restricted zone must follow a well-defined protocol which include changing their footwear, wearing sanitary outer clothing and washing their hands or using sanitizing lotion to protect the hens. Visitors entering the barn must also sign a visitor log and disclose if they have visited another poultry facility to further manage the health risk to the hens.

Uninvited individuals or groups who enter an egg barn environment, not only compromise the standards in place, they risk spreading disease and causing unnecessary stress to the animals under our care, putting the safety of our food supply at risk. By introducing new legislation that safeguards the biosecurity of farms and protects the health of farm animals across the country, through Bill C-205 and other initiatives, we are taking proactive steps to strengthening our food systems and support those who have dedicated their lives to ensuring food security for Canadians.

We also believe that it is important to recognize that our farms are not only a place of business—they are also family homes where multi-generational families and children reside, often located in remote parts of our rural communities. With trespassing incidents becoming more common, farmers and their families are facing increased concerns towards their safety. Increasing the penalties for groups and organizations who trespass on a farm property may help decrease these unfortunate incidents, and support the mental health and wellbeing of farmers and farm families.

Working together to strengthen our food system

In closing, Egg Farmers of Canada recommends that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recognize the unique situation farmers face when it comes to the widespread risks that uninvited individuals or groups introduce to farm environments. It is our perspective that Bill C-205 complements existing provincial and territorial initiatives that have or are working towards strengthening legislation in this area. While these provincial and territorial steps are encouraging, this matter requires federal leadership to ensure the biosecurity concerns of our farmers are fully addressed and the security of our food supply is upheld. Lastly, we appreciate the opportunity to offer our views, and are available to answer your questions.

Additional information

For more information, please contact:

Christine Anawati

Director, Corporate and Public Affairs

Egg Farmers of Canada

canawati@eggs.ca