

HUMANE CANADA

BRIEF TO THE

**HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND AGRI-FOOD**

ON

BILL C-205: An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act

Submitted By: Barbara Cartwright, CEO

To: Members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Re: Bill C-205, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act

Introduction

Humane Canada, formerly known as the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, is the only national organization representing humane societies and SPCAs in Canada. We drive positive, progressive change to end animal cruelty and improve animal protection through the enactment of effective legislation.

Our 50 member organizations (listed below) include societies in every province and territory of Canada, apart from Nunavut. These are the very organizations that Canadians have depended upon, not only to care for abused and abandoned animals, but also to advocate for greater care and protection of animals and to provide community resources, research and humane education. These organizations are among the oldest and most trusted social institutions in the country.

It is important to note that more than 30% of Canadian Humane Societies and SPCAs are empowered to enforce provincial and federal legislation pertaining to animal cruelty and abuse. Collectively, these organizations investigate more than 100,000 complaints every year. Humane Canada members have enforced the law for more than a century. This experience provides Humane Canada with a unique perspective into the issue.

Humane Canada has a long history working to advance the welfare of farmed animals through legislation, regulation and standards. For 40 years, Humane Canada has worked alongside the agriculture industry to develop Canada's Codes of Practice, and more recently under the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). As a founding member of NFACC, we advocate for continual improvements to the standards of care for farmed animals that are included in these Codes.

Comments on the Proposed Private Member's Bill, C-205

MP John Barlow has indicated that this bill is intended to address the impact on farmers and biosecurity posed by protesters who trespass onto private farm property. We want to be clear that Humane Canada does not support actions that threaten farmers, their families or the animals on their farms. However, we are greatly concerned about any measures that reduce transparency and accountability in the farming system because these will lead to an increase in situations in which farmed animals are vulnerable to harm.

Transparency

There is increasing concern among members of the public regarding the welfare of farmed animals. The revelation of cruelty incidents on farms when undercover footage is released has contributed to greater activity from members of the public, including trespassing, to raise awareness about farmed animal welfare and cruelty. Reducing transparency will not address these increasing concerns. Rather, a more robust system of oversight of agricultural settings is needed to improve animal treatment, increase transparency, and ensure farmed animal practices are more humane and provide for the needs of the animals.

It is a well understood aspect of human nature that the lack of transparency causes behaviour to deteriorate. On the other hand, increasing transparency will encourage those working in the agriculture sector to abide by best practices, standards and requirements, thereby building public confidence. Transparency and accountability are core requirements of a strong agriculture sector with a social license to operate. Measures that seek to reduce transparency, such as Bill C-205, further erode public trust in agriculture.

Biosecurity

The Health of Animals Act is described as “*An Act respecting diseases and toxic substances that may affect animals or that may be transmitted by animals to persons, and respecting the protection of animals*”. Thus it is plainly not the appropriate place to address issues of trespass. At the federal level, that is already addressed in the *Criminal Code*, and provinces have their own legislation addressing trespass explicitly. Federal government officials are not currently mandated or equipped to address the presence of trespassers on Canadian farms. As clearly explained by CFIA officials who provided testimony to this committee, CFIA inspectors do not have the mandate, resources or tools to address the presence of trespassers. They have the mandate to address regulated diseases in order to protect animals or animal to human transmission of substances and diseases. The officials also clearly acknowledged the very low biosecurity risk of trespassers. There is a much greater biosecurity risk from farmers and farm employees, however Bill C-205 as drafted effectively excludes those individuals.

The Role of the Federal Government on Farms

On-farm animal welfare and protection is understood to be a matter of provincial jurisdiction. However, some committee members indicated an interest in having the federal government demonstrate leadership at the national level on this issue. Furthermore, we note that a desire for consistent national standards in the care of farmed animals has resulted in the creation of NFACC and its Codes of Practice. If further leadership is needed to address the issues before the committee, we suggest the federal government:

- Provide strong support for NFACC’s work to create standards of care for animal species farmed in Canada, including through increased financial support for this work;

- Increase engagement on NFACC to support the development of robust standards that meet the expectations of the Canadian public for humane practices and treatment of animals, as well as the role of animal agriculture in the worsening climate crisis;
- Support the implementation and verification of adherence by Canadian industry sectors to strong national standards. Such a system should include an effective, transparent and accountable third-party auditing program to ensure compliance with the standards, which would augment public confidence in the agriculture sector.

The wave of legislative initiatives across Canada to strengthen anti-trespass laws on farms in response to public protest demonstrates that governments are reflecting on the current situation. However the fundamental underlying issue must be considered: the Canadian public is increasingly concerned about how animals are treated on farms. This needs to be addressed through a commitment to improving animal agriculture in Canada to meet public values regarding welfare and the environment, rather than a retreat from transparency.

Sincerely,



Barbara Cartwright, CEO

About Humane Canada

Humane Canada, the federation of humane societies and SPCAs, is the only national organization representing humane societies and SPCAs in Canada. We drive positive, progressive change to end animal cruelty and improve animal protection through the enactment of effective legislation. Our 50 member organizations include societies in every province and two territories. Approximately 30% of these organizations act as enforcement authorities for provincial and federal legislation pertaining to animal cruelty and abuse.

Humane Canada has a long history working to advance the welfare of farmed animals. Our federation was formed in 1957 out of this concern and was influential in the introduction of the federal Humane Slaughter of Food Animals Act in 1959. Humane Canada continues to play a crucial role in farmed animal welfare in Canada. As a founding member of the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC), we advocate for continual improvements to the standards of care for farmed animals that are included in Canada's Codes of Practice, referenced in several provinces' animal protection legislation.

List of Humane Canada Member Organizations

Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society	Hamilton Burlington SPCA	Regina Cat Rescue
Alberta SPCA	Happy Valley Goose Bay SPCA	Regina Humane Society
Alliston and District Humane Society	Humane Society Dawson	Royal City Humane
Animatch	Humane Society Kawartha Lakes	Saskatchewan SPCA
Association of Animal Shelter Administrators of Ontario	Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth	Saskatoon SPCA
BC SPCA	Humane Society London & Middlessex	Sault Ste. Marie & SPCA
Burin Peninsula SPCA	Lincoln County Humane Society	Société protectrice des animaux de Québec
Burlington Humane Society	Medicine Hat SPCA	SPA de l'Estrie
Calgary Humane Society	Miramichi SPCA	SPA de l'Outaouais
Canadian Association for Humane Trapping	Montreal SPCA	Spayaid PEI
Central Alberta Humane Society	New Brunswick SPCA	SPCA Péninsule
Charlotte County SPCA	Newfoundland & Labrador SPCA (St. Johns SPCA)	Thunder Bay and District Humane Society
Cochrane & Area Humane Society	Northwest Territories SPCA	Toronto Humane Society
Edmonton Humane Society	Nova Scotia SPCA	Victoria Humane Society
Exploits Valley SPCA	Oakville & Milton Humane Society	Windsor Essex County Humane Society
Fredericton SPCA	Oromocto & Area SPCA	Winnipeg Humane
Gander & Area SPCA	Ottawa Humane Society	Wood Buffalo Humane Society (Fort McMurray SPCA)
Greater Moncton SPCA	Prince Edward Island Humane Society	
Guelph Humane Society		