



CANADIAN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

BRIEF TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING COMMITTEE
ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD REGARDING
BILL C-205 - *AN ACT TO AMEND THE HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT*

MAY 28, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity for the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) to provide input on Bill C-205: *An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act*. CCA supports the intentions of Bill C-205, to prevent exposure of animals to a disease or toxic substance, which will work in tandem with the beef sector's robust animal health and welfare standards.

CCA represents Canada's 60,000 beef producers. The Canadian beef cattle industry is a significant driver of our economy and a global leader in sustainability. The beef industry is Canada's second largest single source of farm income, contributing \$21.8 billion to gross domestic product at market prices and supporting 347,672 full-time equivalent jobs. A thriving beef industry generates considerable economic, environmental, and social opportunity and benefits for Canada.

Canadian beef producers are devoted to the highest standards of health and welfare for their animals. Biosecurity is essential to protecting herd health and the safety of Canada's food system. Biosecurity at the farm and feedlot level includes following a set of recommended best practices to prevent and mitigate the introduction of disease, or to assist in the control of further disease spread. Strong biosecurity practices protect the national beef herd from foreign animal disease, which is achieved through appropriate visitor control, sanitation measures, and preventing food and other prohibited products entering Canada. The introduction of a foreign animal disease is a major threat to beef producers that would create devastating animal health, economic, and trade consequences. For example, it's been estimated that a large Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak would have a \$65 billion impact to Canada's GDP.

Proper animal care and welfare is paramount in the beef industry; producers continue to ensure the best life possible for their livestock. This proactive approach includes maintaining animal health, minimizing stress when handling, treating, or transporting animals, and continually updating and improving practices.

Canada's beef producers adhere to the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, which provides requirements and recommendations designed to meet robust standards of animal care for beef cattle. The Code was developed to augment existing laws and regulations, reflecting the industry's commitment to the humane treatment and care of beef cattle. The Code outlines recommended science-based practices and requirements on a variety of topics including housing, feeding, transport decision making and other management processes. Further, CCA is a member of the National Farm Animal Care Council, which brings together animal producer groups, governments, veterinarians, academics, animal welfare groups, transporters, and other key stakeholders. Together the council, among other activities, reviews and renews Codes of Practice to ensure the continued health and welfare of animals.

Canada's beef producers further demonstrate their commitment to animal health and care through the Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+) program, which enables certified beef operations to demonstrate to consumers and retailers that their operation adheres to the highest standards for food safety, animal care, and environmental stewardship. For over a decade, the

Verified Beef Production program helped producers meet food safety standards. Now, with the addition of animal care, biosecurity, and environmental stewardship components to VBP+, the program is positioned to validate sustainable beef production practices across Canada.

With respect to Bill C-205, CCA believes the proposed amendments will bolster the *Health of Animals Act* by providing additional safeguards to mitigate livestock's exposure to disease or toxic substances from trespassers. Trespassers on cattle farms, ranches and feedlots can create additional hazards that risk biosecurity. Individuals could knowingly or unknowingly introduce diseases or other contaminants that could harm animals and could lead to a worst-case scenario of herd depopulation to control disease spread. This scenario—that producers work so hard through rigorous standards—would be detrimental to Canada, consumers, and the sector. Bill C-205's proposed amendments to the *Health of Animals Act* will help minimize the social, environmental, and economic risks that animal disease places on Canada's food supply. With the COVID-19 pandemic as a recent example, the spread of virus and disease can quickly spiral if health standards are not adhered to.

It is important to note that while Bill C-205 enhances the safety and protection of cattle producers and Canada's food production system, it also maintains and respects a citizen's rights to lawful and peaceful protest. Canada's beef producers recognize the importance of transparency and are passionate about openly sharing the story of their farm or ranch and demonstrating how they care for their animals. Beef producers often host visitors, ranging from students to journalists and policy makers, to tour their operation and demonstrate how their cattle are raised and land is managed. To maintain the health and safety of their animals, producers ensure these farm visits follow biosecurity and sanitation protocols.

In conclusion, CCA supports Bill C-205 and believes the proposed amendments will provide increased safety to producers, the cattle they raise, and food they produce. CCA appreciates the opportunity to provide input on this important study and would be pleased to provide any further information that the Committee may seek.

About the Canadian Cattlemen's Association

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association represents Canada's 60,000 beef farms, ranches and feedlots. Founded by producers and led by a producer-elected board of directors, CCA works to address issues that concern Canada's beef producers. CCA's vision is to have a dynamic, profitable Canadian beef industry with high-quality beef products recognized as the most outstanding by customers at home and around the world.

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