

Bill C-205:

**Taking Action to Better Protect
Chicken and Turkey Farms**

Brief Submitted by
Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec

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1. Executive summary

This brief on Bill C-205 was prepared by the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec to inform the members of the AGRI Committee about how trespassing on farms affects chicken and turkey farmers.

Unauthorized entry by an individual or group may have serious effects on animal and human health and welfare and major economic impacts.

I Bill C-205 should therefore be adopted in order to implement deterrents that discourage anyone who would consider breaking into a livestock building. However, it would be a good idea to simplify some of the wording of the bill using terms that would ensure optimal implementation of its provisions.

It is important to take action to better protect chicken and turkey farms from anyone who would consider trespassing on them. In our opinion, the stability of the entire supply chain and our food self-sufficiency are at stake.

2. About the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec

The Éleveurs de volailles du Québec (EVQ) represents 731 farmers throughout Quebec, including 650 chicken and 157 turkey farmers who raise their birds with care and in compliance with strict food safety and animal welfare standards.

The organization's mission is to advocate for the social and economic interests of Quebec poultry farmers at the local, regional, provincial, national and international levels.

In Quebec, the poultry industry supports 28,641 jobs (direct, indirect and induced), \$2.046 billion in annual gross domestic product, \$737 million in farm gate receipts and \$689 million in tax revenues. Our industry is therefore a major driver of the dynamism and economic vitality of our regions and communities.

We are proud of our important contribution to the regional and national economy, but our greatest pride is that of providing Quebec and Canadian consumers with quality food every day—poultry that is properly raised in an environmentally friendly manner and that is part of a healthy diet.

3. Why take action to better protect chicken and turkey farms?

Trespassing on a farm not only puts the health, safety and welfare of the animals at risk, but it can also result in significant losses for the farmers who are victimized. It can also weaken Canada's food supply chain.

This section summarizes the main threats, consequences and impacts of a breach of biosecurity measures on a chicken or turkey farm in Quebec.

3.1 Food safety and animal welfare programs jeopardized

Trespassing on a chicken or turkey farm can have very serious impacts on the health of the birds.

On-Farm Food Safety Programs (OFFSPs) establish rigorous biosecurity and animal welfare standards for both chicken¹ and turkey farms across Canada.² Since 2009, these programs have been continually improved to meet the demands of Canadians. Quebec's chicken and turkey farmers work hard every day to comply with these programs, which are recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

¹ <https://www.chickenfarmers.ca/on-farm-food-safety/>
<https://volaillesduquebec.qc.ca/salubrite-a-la-ferme/> [in French only]

² <https://www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca/on-the-farm/tfc-on-farm-food-safety-program/>
<https://volaillesduquebec.qc.ca/salubrite-a-la-ferme/> [in French only]

All farmers must meet OFFSP requirements to obtain a certificate of compliance with the programs. Each year, farmers are audited in order to maintain their certification. Almost 100% of chicken and turkey farms in Quebec are certified.

Quebec poultry farmers therefore take special care to follow procedures during visits to their farms, including when suppliers need to enter the production site and the buildings where the birds are housed. At several stages of the farming process, there is a risk of compromising biosecurity, and complying with these standards is a way to protect farms and supply good-quality, healthy meat to Canadian consumers.

The following list outlines some of the actions every farmer must take to properly raise healthy birds, in keeping with farming procedures that promote biosecurity, food safety and animal welfare:

1. Keep the premises, poultry barns and equipment clean;
2. Set up biosecurity areas inside and outside poultry barns;
3. Lock poultry barns and keep visitor logs;
4. Wear farm-specific clothing and a different pair of boots in each poultry barn;
5. Use effective pest control to keep out wild birds and rodents; and
6. Ensure downtime between flocks.

Trespassing on a poultry farm therefore directly jeopardizes all these measures that Quebec farmers take to ensure the welfare of their animals and the safety of their facilities.

[3.2 Impacts on bird health](#)

Trespassing on a poultry farm can have immediate, serious impacts on bird health.

First, farmed birds, especially turkeys, are sensitive to stress caused by intrusions into their living space. This stress can lead the birds to huddle, causing injury (cellulitis) and even death by asphyxia in many birds. Stress, a weaker immune system and a disruption of their watering and feeding habits are also possible. The mortality and condemnation rates of birds would undoubtedly increase because of trespassing on the farm.

Over the medium term, diseases may result if biosecurity measures are not followed. Indeed, a series of diseases, including avian influenza, infectious laryngotracheitis (ILT) and mycoplasmosis, can be introduced by humans entering a farm without authorization, regardless of their intent.

Avian influenza is a reportable disease because of its substantial potential impact on human and animal health and on the Canadian economy in the event of large-scale spread. Therefore, animal owners, veterinarians and laboratories are required to report to the CFIA District Veterinarian any animal that has or is suspected of having one of these diseases as soon as possible. The CFIA then immediately takes control or eradication measures. However, if the disease is introduced through trespassing without the farmer being aware of it, the infection may have time to spread more widely before mitigating actions are taken, further complicating the work of health authorities and raising the associated costs. Furthermore, in the case of avian flu, since it can be transmitted to humans, a person trespassing on a

farm poses a real danger to general public health. As Canada is just beginning to recover from an unprecedented global pandemic, this is a risk the country cannot afford to take.

With respect to ILT and mycoplasmosis, the CFIA requires producers to report all cases at slaughterhouses involved in export activities where certain restrictions apply. The partners of the Quebec poultry sector have been proactive on this issue by developing an emergency plan in collaboration with and under the management of the Équipe québécoise de contrôle des maladies avicoles (EQCMA). This plan would control the incidence of these two diseases through voluntary reporting of cases and the establishment of at-risk areas in the region around a case. These diseases have a very serious economic impact because they have high mortality rates and significantly affect birds' zootechnical performance.

3.3 Significant financial losses for farmers

Stress from trespassing on poultry farms can quickly account for a 10% to 20% loss of birds due to huddling and disruption. Being curious and nervous by nature, these birds will not hesitate to wander around or to huddle in a corner. This situation is even more tragic at higher weights. In addition, losses are incurred when birds are condemned or given demerits. Depending on the age of the birds and their level of feathering, scratches will vary in size and cause financial losses for the farmer.

Trespassing on a poultry farm can have much more serious consequences should an avian disease break out in the flock.

To understand the seriousness of this type of outbreak, the EQCMA report produced during the ILT outbreak in Beauce from May 18 to July 28, 2010, is helpful.³ Of particular value is the estimate of the costs of this event. Because of how easily ILT spreads, this outbreak, which began in a single poultry barn, affected no less than five municipalities, including 20 of the 39 poultry barns on 17 farms in the region. A total of 1.8 million chicks had to be vaccinated in two consecutive lots following the infected lot. In addition to increased mortality and condemnation in the infected lots of birds, necropsies and serologies, increased on-site biosecurity measures, manure heating, additional washing and disinfection, the fumigation of the affected poultry barns, and bird vaccination, preservation and treatment were necessary, along other tasks that are difficult to quantify, such as carcass collection and disposal, burial, composting. The overall cost to the industry of this event was estimated at \$1,855,000. This amount includes the number of chickens infected and vaccinated as a result of the infection, but not the expenses that are more difficult to quantify. This example illustrates the potential magnitude of a breach—even a seemingly insignificant one—in the biosecurity measures on Quebec poultry farms.

It is also worth noting that Quebec poultry farms have specialized equipment to optimize growing conditions and bird welfare. However, this equipment is expensive and, if it is damaged during a break-in, the farm could suffer serious consequences, including total loss of the lot of birds if there is no ventilation or heating.

³ Robin, Nathalie, and Bissonnette Marc, (2011), *Post-mortem de l'éclosion 2010 de laryngotrachéite infectieuse en Beauce*, presented at the annual general meeting of the EQCMA on February 10, 2011 [in French only].

The potential effects of trespassing on a farm described above are not a complete list of what this act could mean for a Quebec chicken or turkey farmer, but they are examples that show the importance of adopting more severe deterrent and coercive measures to prevent such situations.

3.4 The weakened supply chain

Beyond financial considerations, the death of thousands of chickens and turkeys as a result of farm trespassing could also weaken the entire supply chain by reducing volumes for Canadian domestic consumption.

Under the supply management system, chicken and turkey farmers are responsible for producing, nationally and in each province, the right amount of chicken for Canadian consumers. Industry stakeholders set this volume for each production cycle. The loss of birds due to excessive mortality from trespassing has a direct impact on the availability of product for consumers. Chicken and turkey farmers are proud to work every day to feed Canadian families, which is why they want to raise birds in a safe and secure manner, free from any trespassing that could destabilize the entire production chain and, at the same time, temporarily jeopardize our ability to adequately meet the needs and demands of the Canadian market.

3.5 Human consequences

The fear of being the target of a break-in is very real among our members, and the stress that this can cause may be traumatic for the targeted farmer. The Éleveurs de volailles du Québec is working with the national agencies to train its members for this possibility and to help them respond appropriately, if necessary. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to prevent this type of act and to take into account that, in addition to animal health, the health of farmers is also at stake, given the psychological and physical consequences of trespassing on the farm.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

Considering all the risks and impacts of trespassing on a farm, for the animals themselves and for the farmers concerned and society in general, it is obvious that the current legislation needs to be strengthened.

The Éleveurs de volailles du Québec therefore recommends that the House of Commons adopt Bill C-205 in order to implement deterrents to discourage anyone who would consider breaking into a livestock building.

However, the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec believes that the wording “enter a building or other enclosed place in which animals are kept knowing that or being reckless as to whether entering such a place could result in the exposure of the animals to a disease or toxic substance that is capable of affecting or contaminating them” implies that the person must first be aware of the risks and direct consequences of their trespassing. In our opinion, this would be difficult to demonstrate beyond a

reasonable doubt before the country's judicial authorities, complicating enforcement of the Act and application of the penalties for non-compliance with its provisions. In this regard, we believe that a simpler wording, such as "enter a building or other enclosed place in which animals are kept without authorization" would be easier to enforce.

In closing, the Éleveurs de volailles du Québec would like to salute and thank John Barlow, the Member of Parliament for Foothills, for his work in introducing this bill, which we hope will benefit the entire poultry industry in Quebec and Canada once it is adopted by the Parliament of Canada.

By taking action and adopting legislation to deter trespassing on our farms for good, we can improve the health, security, safety and welfare of the animals we raise, for the benefit of all Canadians.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: References and relevant links

Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec, *Rapport annuel 2020*, consulted at <https://rapportannuelevq.ca/> [Available in French only].

Les Éleveurs de volailles du Québec, *Salubrité à la ferme*, consulted at <https://volaillesduquebec.qc.ca/salubrite-a-la-ferme/> [Available in French only].

Chicken Farmers of Canada, *On-Farm Food Safety Program (OFFSP)*, consulted at <https://www.chickenfarmers.ca/on-farm-food-safety/>.

Turkey Farmers of Canada, *On-Farm Food Safety Program and Animal Care Program*, consulted at <https://www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca/on-the-farm/tfc-on-farm-food-safety-program/>.

EQCMA, *Maladies avicoles*, consulted at <http://www.eqcma.ca/maladies-avicoles/38-introduction> [Available in French only].

EQCMA, Bilan des activités 2010 and 2011, consulted at http://www.eqcma.ca/uploads/files/4_EQCMA_Bilan_des_activites_2010.pdf and http://www.eqcma.ca/uploads/files/5_EQCMA_Bilan_des_activites_2011.pdf [Available in French only].

Robin, Nathalie, and Bissonnette Marc, (2011), *Post-mortem de l'éclosion de 2010 de laryngotrachéite infectieuse en Beauce*, presented at the annual general meeting of the EQCMA on February 10, 2011.

Government of Canada. *Criminal Code* (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46), "Part XI: Wilful and Forbidden Acts in Respect of Certain Property (continued)," online: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/page-92.html>.