

# GRASS ROUTES



**RICH SMITH**  
Executive Director

## SAFETY FOR ALL FARM AND RANCH WORKERS

There has been a lot of talk about the uproar created in rural Alberta by the introduction last fall of Bill 6, the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*. Bill 6 brought sweeping changes in labour legislation for farmers, ranchers, their families, and their employees. The reaction to Bill 6 was swift, strong, and loud. Farmers and ranchers across the province were outraged over what they saw as a lack of meaningful consultation with the agriculture industry on Bill 6 and a lack of consideration for the specific characteristics and requirements of farm and ranch work. The subsequent amendments to Bill 6 that exempted farmers, ranchers, and their families from Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) rules and mandatory WCB coverage certainly did not eliminate opposition to the legislation.

Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) and the cattle and beef producers on whose behalf we work all share a commitment to ensuring that farm and ranches are healthy and safe places for all workers. We strongly believe that awareness, education, and training are far more effective than legislation for improving health and

safety. Unfortunately, the passage of Bill 6 and the development of the regulations and standards under the Act will force producers and producer associations to focus on legislation for the next year instead of working to build the culture of safety that will create the greatest benefit for workers.

In January, ABP joined close to 30 agricultural producer boards, commissions, and associations in forming the Alberta Agriculture Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition (AgCoalition). The AgCoalition is a producer driven initiative with founding members that work on behalf of over 95 percent of the primary agricultural producers in Alberta. The purpose of the AgCoalition is to provide an effective mechanism for primary producer organizations to work together and deliver a unified voice in the development of a culture of health and safety on farms and ranches.

The AgCoalition initiatives will be directed by an Industry Leadership Advisory Committee (ILAC) that will consist of one producer from each of the coalition member organizations. The coalition is also forming a Technical Working Group of association staff and industry representatives that will gather information and provide advice to coalition representatives involved in consultations on labour regulations and standards. The ILAC and Technical Working Group are supported by a Strategy Committee comprising senior staff from the coalition members.

One of the first tasks for the AgCoalition has been coordinating producer participation in the six working groups that the Government of Alberta intends

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

165, 6815 – 8 Street NE  
Calgary, AB Canada  
T2E 7H7

tel 403.275.4400  
fax 403.274.0007

[www.albertabeef.org](http://www.albertabeef.org)

[famoustaste.albertabeef.org](http://famoustaste.albertabeef.org)



**KARIN SCHMID**  
Beef Production  
Specialist

# MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE IN TRANSPORT

Activist groups like Mercy for Animals have been in both mainstream and agricultural media recently criticizing Canadian livestock transport regulations, calling them the “worst in the Western world.” The basis for this accusation seems primarily focused on the duration livestock (including cattle) are permitted to be in transit without feed or water, but they are also concerned with the lack of temperature thresholds for transportation.

Current Canadian law requires that animals be offloaded for a minimum of five hours and provided with feed and water after 48 hours of transport, unless they can reach their final destination within 52 hours. The use of bedding or sand is a regulatory requirement for all journeys. The Health of Animals Regulations also specify how animals must be handled, the segregation of different classes or species of livestock, and special rules about the transport of unfit, young or pregnant animals. It is likely that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will propose changes to these laws in the near future. Not only is it important that these changes be science based, but it is even more important to focus on the welfare outcomes of the animals being transported.

Research led by Dr. Karen Schwartkopf-Genswein of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and a world renowned expert in beef cattle welfare, examined over 9,000 loads and close to half a million cattle commercially transported over

an 18 month timeframe. They found that the time for long-haul trips averaged 16 hours in length, with over 95 percent of cattle spending less than 30 hours in transit. More importantly though, 99.95 percent of long-haul (over four hours) and 99.98 percent of short-haul (under four hours) reached their destination injury-free. Welfare outcomes of beef cattle being transported under current industry conditions are very positive. With over 99.9 percent of cattle reaching their destination safely, care needs to be taken so that any regulatory changes do not inadvertently decrease this positive welfare outcome.

This research did identify some areas of concern that should be considered to mitigate risks associated with transport. Loading densities lower than 0.5 or greater than 1.5 m<sup>2</sup>/animal are more likely to cause negative welfare outcomes. Under loading in the doghouse and nose compartments for recently weaned calves and market cows in particular increases the chance of injury. Longer journeys in extreme weather conditions increase shrink and poor welfare outcomes. Market cows are the most vulnerable class of cattle during transport, as they tend to be older or thinner and may have pre-existing health problems. In addition, federally inspected slaughter tends to be centralized in both the east and the west, and because provincially inspected meat cannot be transported out of province, this means that the market cows can be exposed to longer journeys than expected.

A paper published in Animal Health Research Reviews in 2015 identified research priorities related to transport, including determining the optimal loading densities by animal type and weather, the effect of transportation durations experienced by cattle sold and resold through auction markets, the effect of rest stops (with and without unloading), optimal trailer design features to control environmental conditions (ventilation, bedding, boarding), ideal internal ramp and compartment

construction of trailers, and alternative strategies to mitigate transportation stress.

Research efforts in Canada are focusing on these and other transportation related priorities. Projects examining microclimate of trailers in different environmental conditions and the impact on animal welfare, the effect of winter transport conditions and trailer acceleration, transporting market cows safely in winter conditions, and an observational benchmarking study on welfare outcomes of cattle arriving at auction markets and processing plants have either been recently completed or are in progress.

Producers have an important role to play in ensuring good animal welfare outcomes before and after transportation. The initial decision of whether or not to load an animal has a measurable impact on whether cattle arrive at their destination safely and in good health.

A number of industry resources exist to help make pre-transport decisions. The Canadian Livestock Transport is a certification program providing training and support services for livestock truckers, shippers and receivers. There is a Code of Practice for Transportation on the National Farmed Animal Care Council website: [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/transport](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/transport), and the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle contains a section on transportation. The Beef Code also contains detailed guidance on humane euthanasia methods and copies are available online at [www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle](http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle), or from the ABP office. Alberta Farm Animal Care has released an updated version of the Humane Handling Guidelines for Beef Cattle, also available from the ABP office or online at [www.afac.ab.ca/producer-info/beef/beef-humane-handling-guidelines](http://www.afac.ab.ca/producer-info/beef/beef-humane-handling-guidelines), which deals specifically with how to tell if an animal is unfit for transport or if it needs special provisions to arrive

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# Transport Decision Tree



## FIT ANIMALS TRANSPORT

- Those that will arrive at their final destination in good condition
- According to the *Health of Animals Regulations Part XII* and CFIA policies
- Consult also *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation*.



## COMPROMISED ANIMALS TRANSPORT WITH SPECIAL PROVISIONS\*

*Compromised Animals Policy (Health of Animals Regulations Part XII)*

### Examples:

- Lameness, even if slight (may deteriorate quickly in transit)
- Cancer eye
- Bloating (if not weak or already down)
- Having given birth in the preceding 48 hours
- Acute frostbite
- Labored breathing
- Blindness in both eyes
- Open wound (depending on the severity of the wound, the animal may be unfit)
- Not fully healed after an operation, such as dehorning or castration
- Rectal or vaginal prolapse
- Lumpy jaw
- Left/right displaced abomasum (without weakness, toxicity)
- Abscess
- Acute penis injury
- Hardware disease with localized signs
- Unhealed broken tail or jaw
- Hobbled to prevent kicking, or
- Amputation or deformity (only if fully-healed and not painful).



## UNFIT ANIMALS DO NOT TRANSPORT

*Other than for veterinary diagnosis or care*

### Examples:

- Unable to rise, remain standing, or move without assistance, reluctant to move (non-ambulatory)
- Severe lameness
- Fractured limb or pelvis
- Rupture of pre-pubic tendon (after splitting)
- Likely to give birth
- Uterine prolapse
- Severe cancer eye
- Arthritis in multiple joints
- Cancer/leukosis (extensive)
- Pneumonia (unresponsive with fever)
- Water belly
- Nervous disorder (e.g. rabies – must be reported to CFIA)
- Emaciation, dehydration or dehydration
- Fever, shock or dying.



### \*Special Provisions for Compromised Animals

Compromised animals, if loaded, must be transported **directly** to the nearest available place to receive care, treatment, be slaughtered or euthanized – but only with special provisions, such as:

- Local direct transport only
- Extra bedding
- Loading in a rear compartment
- Separation from other animals
- Penning with a familiar companion animal
- **Other measures as appropriate**, e.g. veterinary assessment prior to loading when unsure of the animal's capacity to withstand transportation.

**Do not continue to transport an animal that becomes compromised or unfit beyond the nearest available place where it can receive care, be euthanized or slaughtered.**

Source: This Appendix was developed by the Code Development Committee with input from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.



**FRED HAYS**  
Policy Analyst

## BANFF BISON

Of Canada's 1,200 bison producers with about 125,000 bison on their farms, 570 are Alberta farmers with 57,500 bison. Most of the Canadian Plains bison originated from the Elk Island National Park plains and wood herds 45 km east of Edmonton. Many bison continue to be moved from Elk Island to other reserves in Canada, the U.S. including Alaska, and Russia; many are also sold at auction to private farmers.

ABP provided comments on the Plan for Reintroduction of Plains Bison in

Banff National Park which highlighted concerns around the lack of detail, funding and costs, population control and potential risk of disease outbreak. The plan left a lot to question relating to liability, what happens after completion or if the pilot is unsuccessful.

The question of potential health risk relates to bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis that stems from the bison issue at Wood Buffalo National Park in northern Alberta. Those herds are subject to ongoing testing and are monitored to ensure that they do not get within range of cattle in the area. Alternatively, Alberta's farmed bison have been kept in close proximity to cattle and have even been maintained on grazing leases with special permits.

Bison from Elk Island are continually 'in quarantine.' The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the park

veterinarians who have tested these bison for over 40 years consider them to be disease-free for bovine tuberculosis, brucellosis, John's disease and anthrax. Dr. Todd Shury, Wildlife Veterinary Pathologist from Saskatoon, has been working with the Elk Island herd for several years. The health policy for movement of live animals off-site was to blood test each for major diseases. That changed some time ago because of the overall good herd condition and now 20 percent of all surplus stock going to slaughter is tissue tested. The health status of the Elk Island herd for tuberculosis and brucellosis is considered to be equal or higher than the status of the Canadian beef herd.

As a pilot project Banff National Park plans to introduce about 30 to 50 head in an 425 square km area or 105,000 acres about 35 km north of the town, in what is classified as a soft release paddock or holding pen for about one month prior to release into the park. Bison can become familiar with their surroundings and it allows additional time for staff to monitor them.

Banff National Park's Wildlife Ecologist David Gummer indicated that the reintroduction plan came out in March 2015 after extensive discussions with area stakeholders. A maximum carrying capacity is anticipated to be about 600 to 1,000 head with around 25 percent of the available winter forage projected to support the herd.

The plan includes an inner park grazing boundary allotment greater than 10 km from the park boundary and another regular boundary greater than 40 km from the park boundary. There are also discussions being held with Alberta's Environment and Parks Department about management of any animals that stray from the park into a 'no go' zone.

Dr. Lu Carbyn, a retired federal biologist who worked with the Wood Buffalo National Park bison, felt the

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to form as part of the consultation process on labour relations, employment standards, and OHS requirements. The AgCoalition compiled nominations from member organizations and submitted them to the government with a request to participate in the process of selecting the working group members. At the time of writing this article, we still have not heard who will be on the working groups or when the consultation process actually will start, but we are hopeful that the government is coming to a better understanding of the effective role the AgCoalition can play in making the legislation acceptable for farmers and ranchers.

The amount of work that ABP and other producer organizations have been doing on Bill 6 is clearly shown

by the long list of articles and actions on the homepage of the ABP website. ABP has been actively participating in the AgCoalition and we are providing some of the staff support for coalition administration and communications activities. The Bill 6 Task Force established by the ABP Board of Directors prepared the ABP policy position on labour legislation with positions and recommendations for labour relations, employment standards, and OHS requirements. We welcome comments and suggestions from cattle and beef producers on this paper and any of our other communications related to Bill 6.

It is now over four months since the introduction of Bill 6 in the Alberta legislature and there is still tremendous uncertainty and apprehension about the impacts

of this legislation on farmers and ranchers. We do know that paid, non-family employees have been covered by the OHS Act and WCB since January 1, 2016. Farm and ranch employers have until April 30, 2016 to register their operations under WCB, but it is our understanding that premiums will be charged back to January 1, 2016. We don't know what the regulations and standards for labour relations, employment standards and OHS will look like, but we are hoping that meaningful consultation with producers will lead to appropriate and acceptable legislation. Farmers and ranchers care about worker safety and we hope that producers and organizations such as ABP can successfully work through the current legislative challenges and move on to building a culture of safety for these workers. ▼

## HOW YOUR CHECK-OFF DOLLARS CONTRIBUTED TO THE COOL REPEAL

Cattle and beef producers across North America celebrated an early Christmas present in December with the repeal of Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) in the U.S. The omnibus appropriations bill that included language repealing COOL was passed on the same day that Canada was to receive authority from the World Trade Organization (WTO) to impose retaliatory tariffs of more than \$1 billion on U.S. products if COOL was not repealed.

The battle against COOL was long and difficult, lasting over seven years and costing cattle producers in Canada close to \$4 million in legal fees. The Government of Canada provided strong and continued support for the beef and pork sectors through this process and the Government of Alberta supported our industry well. We are grateful for the support of the governments, but the investment of producer check-off dollars in Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) legal and advocacy efforts was a major factor in the victory over COOL.

Since the CCA is funded primarily by provincial cattle associations and Alberta is the largest of these associations, the share of the COOL costs that was contributed by Alberta producers through their check-off dollars was over \$2 million. This is a lot of money, but COOL was estimated to cost the Canadian beef industry over \$600 million per year. Clearly, paying \$2 million over seven years to generate \$600 million per year for the industry represents an outstanding return on investment of check-off funds.

Producers often ask what they get for their investment of check-off dollars and the COOL victory is an excellent example of real and substantial benefits for this investment. We thank the Alberta producers who left their check-off dollars with ABP for us to invest in the battle to repeal COOL. ▼

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Banff pilot project was ecologically flawed and costly to maintain. A \$6.4 million project over five years would have limited impact for any community education. Elk Island also manages their herds by harvesting and selling extra stock to maintain animal numbers for good habitat management. The Banff herd will also need to be managed beyond predation and natural death.

Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considered a conservation outreach</li> <li>• enhances ecological integrity of herd</li> <li>• alleviates some concern of disease transmission</li> <li>• developing inner park boundaries for animal containment</li> <li>• good health protocols for Elk Island stock</li> <li>• working with other National Parks and Universities</li> <li>• well developed disease risk assessment</li> <li>• contingency plan with province for bison escape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• poor current relationships with stakeholders</li> <li>• plains bison not scarce (farmed)</li> <li>• no guarantee for disease-free status</li> <li>• relatively expensive project \$6.4M over 5 years</li> <li>• ongoing expense</li> <li>• impediment of animal movement (not natural)</li> <li>• artificial ecological system</li> <li>• take time and resources to monitor impact to area</li> <li>• once bison herd expands to 1,000 head herd size maintenance may be difficult, costly and maybe ineffective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase tourism in region</li> <li>• increase education opportunities</li> <li>• ability for visitors to see bison in natural state</li> <li>• improves eco-tourism in area</li> <li>• ability to undertake bison wildlife research in mountain/foothill region</li> <li>• expand herd to more accessible areas of park</li> <li>• increase biodiversity of other wildlife and plant species</li> <li>• ability to coordinate federal and provincial contingency plan</li> <li>• some herd size control possible through First Nations</li> <li>• could develop adaptive management system for ecological outcome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• risk of Johne's disease to bison transfer from other wildlife</li> <li>• risk of disease transfer to livestock</li> <li>• potential for bison movement into local communities (public safety)</li> <li>• risk to safety of visitors, residents</li> <li>• risk of property damage</li> <li>• highway accidents</li> <li>• nuisance bison</li> <li>• potential damage to ecosystem</li> <li>• grazing competition with other wildlife</li> <li>• potential for limited culling to control herd size</li> <li>• possible shift in predator-prey relationships</li> <li>• high risk of public criticism</li> <li>• may be costly to manage</li> </ul>

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources classify wildlife in terms of threatened populations with their Red List Guideline. Presently, the Plains bison are not considered to be on the Red List. In terms of bison conservation, the expansion of inventory would be seen as expanding some habitat, and increasing numbers in a protected reserve, but not necessary to maintain the species as a whole. The SWOT analysis above was done to assess the pros and cons of the project. Cost certainly is a factor, albeit offset by increased ecotourism and biodiversity expansion in the region.

The Banff National Park bison project has created considerable debate from various quarters about the health considerations for livestock producers and the real conservation and educational opportunities that may or may not be available. Project cost is a real consideration that presently may not have been fully appreciated. The Banff National Park bison reintroduction is planned for January 2017. 🐾

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safely. On-farm emergency slaughter options are also detailed on the ABP website at [www.albertabeef.org/page/cattle-practices](http://www.albertabeef.org/page/cattle-practices).

If, at any time, you are unsure an animal is fit for transport contact your veterinarian.

Transportation is one of the most visible parts of our industry. It is also an area of concern for consumers, as evidenced by the high volume of letters received by agriculture ministers regarding livestock transportation.

Some animals should not leave home. You know which ones they are so make the right choice. ▼

## YOUNG GUNS DUE JUNE 3

If you are between the ages of eight and 21, and are involved in Beef 4-H, junior cattle shows or beef production – this is your opportunity to win one of three prizes in the Young Guns Contest. We want to know what you think is the biggest myth about beef production and the truth behind it. An entry may be submitted as an essay, video, audio segment, social media campaign, press release or any other form of communication.

**Be creative. Three prizes available:**

**1st Place - \$1,000**  
**2nd Place - \$500**  
**3rd Place - \$250**

Send your entry form, on the [www.albertabeef.org](http://www.albertabeef.org) homepage and contest submission to:

Katelyn Laverdure  
Communications Manager  
Alberta Beef Producers  
165, 6815 8 Street, NE  
Calgary, AB T2E 7H7  
E-mail: [katelynl@albertabeef.org](mailto:katelynl@albertabeef.org)

We must receive your entry by midnight, June 3, 2016 to be eligible to win. The winners will be determined by a panel of judges at the Alberta Beef Producers Semi Annual Meeting in June and will be contacted by June 23, 2016. ▼

Keynote address by **ARLENE DICKINSON** Live music by **AIN'T NO RODEO**

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## CONNECT WITH ABP ONLINE

Alberta Beef Producers is constantly working towards better communications with producers. You can sign up for our weekly news updates online at [www.albertabeef.org/page/news/](http://www.albertabeef.org/page/news/) or by contacting [katelynl@albertabeef.org](mailto:katelynl@albertabeef.org).

ABP is on twitter and you can find us [@albertabeef](https://@albertabeef). Our twitter account is connected to a strong community of ag-minded people who are continuously sharing information. You can also like our facebook page at [www.facebook.com/ABBeefProducers](http://www.facebook.com/ABBeefProducers) and be sure to comment on and share our posts. ▼

# 2016 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

At the beginning of May 2016, farm operators will be asked to update Canada's agricultural profile by completing the 2016 Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

The census will provide farmers, farm organizations, policy makers, stakeholders and citizens with relevant information about the future of the Canadian agricultural sector, and help them make informed decisions regarding agricultural practices in this country.

**Stakeholders** - The participation of beef farmers in the Census of Agriculture is an important factor in obtaining new information at the local and national levels.

Accurate statistics give agriculture practitioners an understanding of where we've come from and where we are now, and allow for a well-informed response to tomorrow's farming challenges.

**Policy makers** - The Census of Agriculture is the backbone of Canada's agricultural statistics program. It identifies trends, opportunities and challenges within the agricultural sector. Questions cover topics such as land use, crops, livestock, agricultural labour, machinery and equipment, land management practices and farm finances. The breadth and depth of the census content renders it the most definitive source of information on the agricultural sector, providing a rich source of data about the realities of farming life in Canada.

**Farmers** - In early May, you will receive a letter with easy-to-follow instructions on how to complete your Census of Agriculture questionnaire online. This user-friendly option will save you time by automatically adding totals and limiting the questions to the ones that apply to your operation.

The questionnaire can be completed by anyone who is responsible for, or knowledgeable about, the day-to-day management decisions of your farming operation. As

required by the Statistics Act, the information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

This May, add your voice to those of Canada's beef farmers by completing your Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

## **Quick beef facts from the 2011 Census of Agriculture:**

There were 12.8 million cattle and calves on Canadian farms. Alberta led the country with 5.1 million, followed by 2.6 million in Saskatchewan and 1.7 million in Ontario.

37,406 farms specialized in beef farming (the majority of their farm receipts was received from beef farming). Here are some facts about these farms:

- There was a total of 8.1 million cattle and calves (63% of the total number in Canada).
- The largest 5% of specialized beef farms raised 26.5% of all Canadian cattle and calves.
- 61.2% of specialized beef farms were held in sole proprietorship, 9.7% were owned by a family corporation and 1.3% were owned by a non-family corporation.
- The average herd size of a specialized farm was 215 cattle and calves.
- There were 52,560 operators across Canada and 73.4% were male.
- The average age of an operator was 54 years old.
- Almost half of operators (48.5%) were 55 years and older; 43.4% were 35 to 54 years old; and 8.1% were under 35.
- Nearly half of operators (48.3%) did not work anywhere other than on the farm, while 20.3% worked more than 40 hours per week at another job in addition to their farming duties.

For more information, please visit the Statistics Canada website at [www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=3438](http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=3438).

As required by the Statistics Act, a Census of Agriculture questionnaire must be completed for every agricultural operation in Canada. ▼

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