

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – AUGUST 2013 NEWSLETTER

Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) have created an initiative called “ProAction”. The goal of the program is to create and integrate the following programs across Canada.

- 1) Milk Quality – somatic cell count (SCC)
- 2) Food Safety – Canadian Quality Milk (CQM)
- 3) Animal Welfare
- 4) Biosecurity
- 5) Traceability
- 6) Environment and Sustainability

Three of these programs are already initiated – SCC, CQM and Traceability.

The next two programs to be implemented are animal welfare and biosecurity. The DFC goal is to implement animal welfare between 2015-2019.

We now have the National Farm Animal Care Council – Code of Practice “For the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle” available as a guide to cattle management. This guide contains information and requirements related to dairy cattle care and handling broken into sections covering accommodation and housing, feed and water, health and welfare management, husbandry practices, transportation, and euthanasia. Within each section there is topical information as well as highlighted requirements. For example, in the section on accommodation it states “Housing must allow cattle to easily stand up, lie down, adopt normal resting posture and have visual contact with other cattle. Cattle must have a bed that provides comfort, insulation, warmth, dryness and traction. Bare concrete is not acceptable as a resting surface. These would seem like very reasonable requests for cattle care. The guide contains recommendations and requirements pertaining to the sections mentioned above.

A question which has been asked – “why are we getting involved in animal welfare?” The answer is not simple but is largely due to consumer demand. Certainly social media has not been kind to the animal production industry. There have been too many “You Tube” videos and documentaries on the subject of animal abuse/welfare. Everyone has a camera at hand now and nothing escapes scrutiny.

The guide was created as a proactive step to set ground rules which most feel we can live by. This will go a long way to show welfare advocates that we have a program in place. As such it should be less likely that we will have “animal welfare reform” pushed onto our industry due to pressure from government and activists.

In the United States there is a program called F.A.R.M. (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management). This program has similarities to the welfare topics covered in our “Code of Practice”. Some milk co-operatives are demanding that their producers pass the welfare audit in this program in order to ship milk. The four parts to this program are – body condition scoring, hygiene scoring, injury scoring and locomotion scoring. Lack of compliance would mean finding another plant to buy your milk. In Canada of course, there is only one “plant” which buys your milk.

Start now, read the book, consult with your advisors and begin to make appropriate changes. The guide can be found at www.dairyfarmers.ca

A power point presentation of the DFC ProAction program can be found at www.milk.org/corporate/PDF/2013-AGM-SEGUIN.PDF

Following is an analogy:

On a night out to your favorite restaurant you get seated at a table right beside the door into the kitchen. Throughout the evening you get a good view of an unsanitary environment. So much so, that you will not eat there again.

Consumers buy dairy products in stores that are bright, clean, and fresh. For the most part they will never see the dairy farm “kitchen” except through social media or documentaries. We need to make sure that what they see either directly or through the media, of our “kitchen” encourages their purchases of the DFC “Blue Cow” products.