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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 28, 2019**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat Finnigan**



## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Thursday, February 28, 2019

• (1105)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.)):** Welcome, everyone, to our study on the perception of and public trust in the Canadian agricultural sector. With us this morning we have from the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, Dr. Henry Ceelen, chair of the national issues committee.

Also, on video, we have from the National Farm Animal Care Council, Ryder Lee, chair.

Welcome to you both.

Go ahead, Mr. Ceelen, for up to seven minutes.

**Dr. Henry Ceelen (Chair, National Issues Committee, Canadian Veterinary Medical Association):** Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee as a representative of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

I'm a veterinarian licensed to practice in the province of Ontario. I am the current chair of the national issues committee of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, CVMA.

I have been in private veterinary practice for 38 years, primarily engaged in large animals, mostly dairy cattle, in clinical medicine and surgery. I currently sit on the executive of the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners and was their president in 2010. At present, I am secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Association of Bovine Veterinarians and was their president in 2015.

In my current capacity as a practitioner and CVMA member, I work in close association with livestock producers, especially dairy farmers. I have in my professional network colleagues who work as specialists or generalists on a wide range of farmed animals in the agrifood sector in Canada.

The CVMA provides a national and international forum for over 7,200 veterinarians working in all of Canada's provinces and territories as private practitioners, researchers, educators and public servants. In addition, the CVMA counts 7,300 veterinary technicians and technologists as affiliate members.

Veterinary practitioners provide services to owners of pets, livestock and other animals. In addition to their contributions to public health and food safety, veterinarians help farmers market healthy and humanely raised animals, which are vital to Canada's

reputation as a producer and exporter of billions of dollars of high-quality animals and animal products.

Veterinarians provide unique expertise on the health and welfare of all types of animals and have a professional obligation through the veterinarian's oath to ensure the welfare of animals under their care. Specifically, veterinarians have specific expertise in animal health and disease. They possess the knowledge and understanding of the biology of domesticated animals. They have practical experience and understanding of the care and management of animals as well as practical experience in the recognition of the signs of suffering in animals, and an understanding of the interdependencies that exist between animal health, human health and the environment.

As members of a self-regulated profession, who serve the public and society, veterinarians earn and maintain the public trust through engagement in principle-guided ethical practice. Veterinarians hold themselves, their colleagues and their profession to a high standard of ethical conduct, reflecting the core values and principles of the profession. The public has the reasonable expectation that the care and service provided by veterinarians reflects these core values. As a veterinarian licensed in the province of Ontario, I follow a code of ethics that is comprised of the core values of compassion, trustworthiness, transparency, competence, professionalism and respect.

I believe that the commitment our profession has to its core values is reflected in a positive perception of veterinarians by the public. Studies have shown that the public trusts its veterinarians. A 2015 study in the U.K., for example, demonstrated that 94% of respondents had a high level of trust in their veterinarians and close to 80% were satisfied with the services provided. There is no reason to think that veterinarians are not perceived in a similar way in Canada.

Public trust research by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity over the past several years has clearly shown that Canadians care deeply about the availability of healthy, affordable food. They insist on the humane treatment of farm animals and they expect food safety with respect to food-borne illnesses, disease and drug residues. The high level of trust in veterinarians and the key role we play in supporting producers in sustainable animal agriculture means that veterinarians have an important responsibility to ensure that the public perception of the agrifood system remains high. As veterinarians, we take this responsibility very seriously.

On delivering on its responsibilities, the veterinary profession strives to use its scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of animals and for society in general. This is what is called the One Health approach: that is, an approach to medicine that recognizes that the health of humans, animals and the environment are inextricably linked. Veterinarians or registered veterinary technologists and technicians play a key role in improving the health and welfare of animals they treat in a manner that supports One Health.

As one example, the One Health approach is particularly relevant to the development of collaborative strategies for responsible antimicrobial use in animal and human populations, and through those efforts to significantly reduce the level of drug resistance in antimicrobial populations.

The CVMA recognizes antimicrobial resistance as a growing threat in Canada and around the world. It is crucial that the public health, the veterinary and regulatory communities work together with food animal agriculture to minimize the emergent and continued spread of antimicrobial resistance for the benefit of all. Through a One Health approach, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has helped Canada's commitment to responding to the threat of antimicrobial resistance as described in Health Canada's document, "Tackling Antimicrobial Resistance and Antimicrobial Use: A Pan-Canadian Framework for Action".

Held up as an example of leading guidance on antimicrobial stewardship was a document, "Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Use — A Pan-Canadian Framework for Professional Standards for Veterinarians" developed in 2016 as a collaboration between CVMA and the Canadian Council of Veterinary Registrars. The veterinary oversight framework represents a significant step by the veterinary profession in Canada towards addressing the enhanced veterinary responsibilities for oversight of antimicrobials as a result of changes in federal policies and regulations regarding antimicrobials.

Thanks to funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CVMA reviewed and renewed its guidelines for the prudent use of veterinary antimicrobial medications from 2008. In December 2018, CVMA launched an online platform of guidelines to support Canadian veterinarians in making prudent decisions on the appropriate and responsible use of antimicrobials they prescribe in animals. These new guidelines currently address six species groups: swine, poultry, beef, dairy, small ruminants and companion animals. With continued funding, we hope to expand the guidelines to equine and aquaculture, and to also provide resources on the use of alternatives to antimicrobials.

The CVMA has also developed a concept and design for a pilot veterinary antimicrobial use surveillance system that will focus initially on animal feed. At present, a significant majority of antimicrobials by weight used in food animal agriculture are administered via the feed or water fed to them. Participants in workshops who collaborated in this design included veterinary practitioners, veterinary regulatory bodies, federal and provincial government representatives, industry officials representing producers and feed and animal health industries, and academics. We anticipate a decision from AAFC on project funding in the very near future.

●(1110)

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Dr. Ceelen, I'm going to have to stop you there, we're already a minute over.

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** Sorry.

**The Chair:** I think you were just about complete, so we'll get some questions as we go.

Mr. Ryder Lee, if you want to go for seven minutes or less, please proceed.

**Mr. Ryder Lee (Chair, National Farm Animal Care Council):** Good morning. My name is Ryder Lee and I am the chair of the National Farm Animal Care Council. Thank you to the chair and all the members for the opportunity to speak on the role of the National Farm Animal Care Council, NFACC, in supporting public trust in agriculture.

I live here in Regina where I work as the CEO of the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association. Before that I lived in Ottawa and worked at the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

Way back, I spent my young years on a cow-calf ranch a few hours southwest of Regina. My brother runs that ranch now and I am the typical second son out making my way.

I still have some land and cattle there but I try to keep my nose out of the day-to-day and contribute by working on the diverse files of the association. Perhaps it's this background that was part of becoming the chair of the council.

In the invitation we received to attend this session, it was said that the members would like to understand the challenges and opportunities for the sector, measures taken by industry and government to improve public trust, and what other measures should be taken.

I'd like to start by telling you a good story about a really important measure on farm animal welfare that has been taken by all interested stakeholders including industry and government. It's the story of the National Farm Animal Care Council, and it's a critical piece in the public trust puzzle around farm animal welfare.

The National Farm Animal Care Council is a collaborative partnership of diverse stakeholders created to share information and work together on farm animal care and welfare. NFACC is an essential organization within Canada's animal welfare system with a uniquely Canadian approach.

We address national animal care issues related to farmed animals with a primary focus on animals raised for the production of food for people. We're an organization of process, building credible processes that support diverse stakeholders in developing solutions to animal welfare challenges.

Our ultimate goal is real progress on farm animal welfare while maintaining the viability of Canadian animal agriculture.

NFACC does three things. First, we uphold a credible, science-informed approach for the development, update and maintenance of codes of practice for the care and handling of farm animals. Second, we uphold a standard, credible approach for the development of animal care assessment programs. Third, we facilitate information sharing and communication on farm animal care and welfare amongst diverse stakeholders, a round table, if you will.

What makes NFACC unique is the partnership between animal agriculture industry groups, animal welfare advocates, governments, scientists, veterinarians and the food industry. The relationships cultivated amongst stakeholders that do not normally interact is one of NFACC's key strengths.

All NFACC members support the following core values: we accept the use of farmed animals in agriculture, we believe that animals should be treated humanely and we support approaches that are scientifically informed.

Before 2005, there was no National Farm Animal Care Council. Thirteen and a bit years later, it's hard to imagine managing farm animal welfare without NFACC. The processes and approaches that NFACC has developed to address farm animal welfare are now cornerstones of Canada's animal welfare system and critical for maintaining public trust in how farmers and ranchers care for their animals. The growing buy-in for NFACC's collaborative processes is a testament to the value of working together to make the right decisions on animal welfare.

NFACC is probably best known for supporting the development of codes of practice for the care and handling of farm animals. Canada currently has 15 codes of practice in place, 12 of which have been developed or updated using NFACC's code of practice development process. We have just received funding through the AgriAssurance program of the Canadian agricultural partnership from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to update and develop more codes. The transportation, dairy cattle and goat codes are in the process of being updated and a new-to-Canada farmed finfish code is being developed. We are grateful to the federal government for its continued support through project funding of these important public trust-building initiatives.

Public trust is a pretty new buzzword and maintaining public trust is an imperative for many sectors, including agriculture. Achieving public trust requires transparency, accountability and integrity, three attributes that NFACC and its processes embody and continually aim to strengthen. These are the measures that we need to continue to take going forward. Federal project funding, such as I mentioned, supporting NFACC projects and research will continue to be important to keep all stakeholders able to contribute.

• (1115)

Challenges and opportunities around public trust abound, particularly as it relates to animal welfare. Animal welfare is a multi-dimensional topic; not an easily articulated sound bite or single issue. It's also a topic that generates strong emotions.

The challenge is often in getting past the rhetoric. NFACC has a remarkable track record that demonstrates what can be accomplished when people with different views on animal welfare focus on what they have in common versus what divides them. It's also important

to keep in mind that the welfare of animals is largely dependent upon the care provided by people, so it's integral that those providing that care are involved in any change that's being proposed or managed.

NFACC aims to harness the strengths of diversity and consensus-based collaboration. This in turn maximizes the opportunity for making better and more sustainable decisions on animal welfare and maintaining public trust.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lee.

We'll start our questioning round.

Before we do I'd like to welcome my colleague from the committee on fisheries and oceans, Mr. Todd Doherty.

I am on the fisheries committee and the agriculture committee. Now you know what I mean when I say I'm on the fish-and-chip committee.

Mr. Adam Vaughan is also here in replacement. Thanks for being here.

Now we'll start the question round.

[Translation]

Mr. Berthold, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I ask my question, if all the committee members agree, I'd like us to resume debate on the motion deferred last Tuesday.

I simply want to remind you that the motion reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study on the financial impacts of the summer 2018 drought for Quebec producers; that this study consist of at least two meetings; that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and his officials be invited to appear in order to explain the refusal to accept changes to the crop insurance program that would make the claims admissible for producers affected by the drought of the summer 2018 in Bas-Saint-Laurent, Chaudière-Appalaches, Gaspésie-les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and Abitibi-Témiscamingue; and that representatives of the producers affected by this drought be invited to appear.

I'd like us to resume debate, Mr. Chair.

• (1120)

**The Chair:** Okay.

Mr. Drouin, the floor is yours.

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Do we have authorization to resume debate? Is everyone in favour of doing so?

**The Chair:** I think that we can resume debate. That's what I understood.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** According to the rules, he's allowed to do so. He doesn't need unanimous consent.

**The Chair:** No, to resume debate, he needs unanimous consent.

Is everyone in favour of resuming debate?

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** We can resume debate or simply proceed with the vote.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** To proceed with the vote, we need a debate.

**The Chair:** Mr. Drouin, you have the floor.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** I'm ready to proceed with the vote. I know that there are still ongoing discussions to resolve the issue, and I understand the concerns raised by Mr. Berthold. However, for our part, we're ready to proceed with the vote. That's all.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We'll have a recorded vote.

[*Translation*]

(Motion negated: nays 5; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** Mr. Berthold, you have the floor again.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

While I have the floor, I'd like to say that I somewhat regret the fact that there wasn't really any discussion. I proposed an amendment to the motion, but unfortunately, it didn't work. I regret that we waited until today, Thursday, and that we gave a little hope to the producers. They hoped that we would reach a non-partisan agreement to resolve this issue as quickly as possible.

We'll continue to pressure the government to find a solution. It's unacceptable that people pay insurance premiums, but can't obtain compensation for damage. I'll stop here, Mr. Chair, because I want to share my speaking time with my colleague. I just wanted to make a few comments. I believed, in good faith, that the committee could reach a non-partisan agreement to resolve this situation.

I'll give the floor to Mr. Dreeshen.

[*English*]

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have five minutes.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Thank you to our guests, Ryder in Regina and Mr. Ceelen here.

I think one of the reasons we are studying this is the issue of public trust. It's interesting. Every group and every organization is going to say what it is they do, so that we understand the significance of their engagement.

One of the things that we had heard from the study we had done previously on mental health, as far as farmers and producers are concerned, was about attacks on farmers, social media attacks by animal welfare advocates that are outside of what one would consider is normal.

How are you managing that? Is there is a recognition within the organizations that these attacks are out there? If they don't believe these are attacks, is there at least a recognition that farmers are feeling as though they are being attacked? That was one of the very critical things....

We look at marketing schemes. We have to make sure that the public feels this is right. If the public is not being given proper information, if there is marketing that says there are no antibiotics, and no added hormones and that sort of thing to meat, and then they move from there into "let's have a veggie burger".... If you want to look at the estrogen that is associated with it you go from 5

nanograms to 7 nanograms, when you have thousands in the bun. Yet we're still supposed to believe that here's some organization or business standing up for the health of Canadians.

Then in the labelling aspect of that you might as well have boneless watermelon. That's about how all of this relates in some of the commentary.

Because we have representatives who are dealing with large animals, bovines and so on, I think it's important we talk about some of the other aspects of it. Of course, the CFIA has put together new regulations on transport of animals. That's a critical part. These rules will be taking place in February 2020. Of course, it's dealing with all types of movement of animals, which is important, but it's also a case that it is being done well now.

Yes, any time you want to take another look at things, we can consider that as being improvements, but we see the new trucks that are there, and the way in which they are being loaded, and the care that's associated with it. All of those things are already being done in industry, but when we focus on it, it is as though...“look at the terrible things that are happening here”.

The concept of taking it from 48 hours on a truck to 48 sounds good. Everyone is saying, “if I were in vehicle for 36 hours, I would want to stretch”, but every time you take an animal off, injuries take place.

It's these kinds of things. Farmers are looking at this, and they are saying once again we're putting out these flags and giving another chance for these people who do not understand the industry, and only have vested interest in it, to make added points.

I know I don't have much time left. I've talked for most of it, but perhaps, Ryder, you could talk a little bit about that and then Mr. Ceelen could speak on some of the other issues.

● (1125)

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** Hello. It's good to see you. You raise a lot of good points there.

We must be careful of what we grab onto or commit to in the name of public trust. I think you have talked a lot about how a lot of things are driven by the opinions of a vocal few and not by the actions or desires of the public at large.

One of the measuring sticks I look at for public trust is the marketplace, and how people are behaving. The noise out there—whether it's the threats or the commitments people are calling for—is not the same as what...people are moving around and doing in the marketplace. That might not be a leading indicator, but it's more reliable than any I can think of, mainly taking into account opinions rather than actions.

Those attacks on farmers by people saying nasty things are something to brush off, but the concern is real about regulations continuing to put the squeeze on. You put it well. It encourages some people to not grow, or to get out of it because they get tired. We see it in all aspects of the industry.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lee. Unfortunately, the time has run out.

[Translation]

You have the floor for six minutes, Mr. Drouin.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

My first question is to the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

We decided to do the study because we feel pressure. Even our constituents feel the pressure, including urban constituents who feel the pressure from activists and so on.

As an organization, how do you balance that? Do you get pressure in your organization, potentially from activists saying that you're not doing your job, that you're not applying the science-based rules, for instance for animal agriculture?

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** I've only recently been chair of the national issues committee on the CVMA. To my knowledge, there have not been many comments to us that we're not doing our job, not being proactive and not dealing with the issues with respect to food safety and animal welfare. If you look at the initiatives we've been involved with over the last number of years, we've done a lot. We're not satisfied with where we are right now. We're continuing to work on those files, and we see it as a work in progress.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Your members are veterinarians. Do they have any reason to believe that the majority of animal agriculture is in jeopardy right now because farmers are not taking care of their animals properly?

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** I'm going to put on my veterinary practitioner hat. I work and live with it every day.

I look at it from that perspective. I look at the sum total of my career, which has been a long one, and I look at what's important today, compared to almost 40 years ago when I graduated. When I graduated, there was no real thought about pain management in animals, whether companion animals or food animals. In fact, at that time, there were few or no licensed drugs to be used, especially in food animals. It was a very narrow selection.

As we've progressed, there are new issues that we become more attuned to. As professionals, we take actions to deal with them and contribute to improving the health and welfare of the animals we serve.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** In your opening statement, I didn't hear you sound the alarm that animal welfare is the major issue in Canada. You've mentioned that antimicrobial resistance is the issue of the day, and that's what you guys are focused on right now.

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** Right. I think that's a true statement. I'm not sure if you folks are aware of it, but right now, worldwide, antimicrobial resistance is a very big issue. They are very concerned about the effects on human health.

Right now, that's a very prominent topic. Because it's front of mind provincially, nationally and internationally, we're very heavily engaged in that.

Five years ago, I would have argued that animal welfare was the pre-eminent issue from a veterinary perspective, as it relates to food animal agriculture.

● (1130)

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** Okay.

Mr. Lee, I know you've exchanged with Mr. Dreeshen and me. Your organization has been proactive in terms of producing codes of practice. How do you ensure that farmers follow those codes of practice when it comes to animal welfare?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** That's a good question.

NFACC designs the process for developing those codes. The different industry groups take the lead, whether it's beef producers, dairy farmers or chicken farmers. Those groups come to NFACC and say they would like to use its process to renew their codes.

They can also say they would like to use its process for building assessment programs. There are different programs in each of the different sectors. Step one is getting the code. Step two is assessing the code, and going out on the farms to look at their practices and say, "Here's what the code says for requirements and recommendations...."

Several of those programs are multi-faceted now. They'll go out and look at animal care, environment, food safety and different things like that. They are kind of a whole farm assessment program.

We are seeing lots of that. That's done by the leadership of the industry groups themselves. NFACC is the home for making sure the industry groups are doing those, developing those, with a robust process, engaging all the stakeholders that should be engaged, including the public. You come out the other end with a piece that is defensible and very thoroughly done.

**Mr. Francis Drouin:** The role that you play is important. I'm not sure if a lot of Canadians know the role you play. I come from a rural riding, and I don't know that even those who are in my rural riding understand what NFACC does. Do you do any marketing to the general population to ensure that there is that public confidence between the regular consumer and the farmers who produce the food?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Mr. Lee. We have to go to the next questioner, we're out of time.

We go to Mr. MacGregor for six minutes.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Dr. Ceelen, I'd like to start with you. In your opening statement, you made remarks about the really high level of public trust that exists with veterinarians. I think this is the case for a lot of professions involved in medical fields, because you have provincial licensing agencies. Also, you exist by a code of ethics.

A main focus of this study is the public's perception and trust. As large animal veterinarians, can you maybe inform this committee about a veterinarian's duty to report when cases of abuse are suspected, such as malnourishment or lack of due care? What do veterinarians do in those circumstances? The public is wondering how farms are checked and what veterinarians do when they see a case of suspected abuse.

•(1135)

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** I'm going to have to answer that question from an Ontario perspective, because I'm not completely up to speed with the other provinces and territories.

In Ontario now, it is a mandatory requirement to report all cases of suspected abuse; we have no option. We have to break client confidentiality to do it. The repercussion is that, if a case of animal abuse were to occur and we were not to report it, our licence would be in jeopardy. There's a very high standard we need to meet with respect to that. Again, I would argue that we take that very seriously.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** For farms in Ontario, how frequently do they need to have veterinarians come and visit?

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** There is no official requirement, but there is an understood requirement that it should be at least once a year.

Again, I'm going to speak to you from my understanding. I have a pretty good understanding of Ontario. At one time, it was in writing that a veterinarian had to be on those premises at least once a year. They have more recently removed that requirement, but they have given quite a lot of detail to define how often a veterinarian feels they need to be there. I think they define it to a level that veterinarians can make the proper judgment on whether it needs to be every two months, every year, etc. It is an absolute requirement to have a reasonable understanding of the practices and procedures that occur on that farm and the primary conditions there. Even within my own clientele, that time interval might vary.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you.

Mr. Lee, I was reading an article in the Calgary Herald concerning the recent changes to the animal transport regulations. I have had conversations with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. They noted they have an over 99% success rate and that if you reduce the number of hours—as Mr. Dreeshen was alluding to—the injuries happen when the animals are being unloaded and then loaded back up. I think the percentages by themselves, because even with livestock generally.... According to the CFIA, approximately 98% of livestock shipments are already in compliance with the new standards. If I put Joe Public's hat on, it's not really the percentages that may bother people, but what the percentages represent. The 2% not in compliance represents an estimated 16 million animals per year that may be suffering and then an additional nearly 1.6 million animals....

This study is about public perception. I'm wondering if you can offer some thoughts. We're trying to address public perception when they see those kinds of numbers. Do you have any strategies or recommendations for this committee on how to address that, given that you're talking about animals in the millions?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** The important thing to note there is that the 98% in compliance is the 98% that travel less than the time in the new regs.... There's nothing to do, no judgment on whether those trips turned out to be bad or not. The 99.9% plus is research performed, funded by Ag Canada, looking at how those cattle got on this way, and they got off in a good way as well.

It's that level of success.... There are real numbers there, but when you get close to 100%, and you change what you're doing, it's much harder to get closer to 100% than it is to move away.

Some of those objections have been raised. There's research going on to look at unloading time and rest time, and whether that is more positive than getting the trip done. There will be ramifications from these changes, and it might change where buyers are, and it will change where animals flow to. That's going to mean real impacts for farmers and ranchers in Ontario and in the Prairies as well.

•(1140)

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now we have Mr. Longfield for six minutes.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to both of you for your testimonies this morning.

I want to start off with Mr. Ceelen from the veterinary point of view. The University of Guelph is quite heavily and deeply involved with animal health. You mentioned One Health, which is an approach that the University of Guelph has also taken that really brings the framework of the conversation into a good context.

When we look at the health of the animals, though, and we talk about antimicrobials, by taking away antibiotics, by taking away treatments for infections.... Say an animal has a broken leg and has to be treated. How else would we deal with animals if we weren't using antimicrobials?

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** Just so it's clear, we're not talking about removing antibiotics or antimicrobials when they're necessary. There's a real distinction to be made there, because animal welfare is really important, and it's more important than restricting or reducing the amount of antimicrobials we use. Animal welfare comes first. In those cases where it's deemed necessary, absolutely every animal that needs it will be administered an antimicrobial.

However, it's been my experience over the years that new modalities occur, and when we have some of our paradigms change or we're asked to look critically at something to do with animal health, we find, when the research gets done, that there are other methods to do it that are just as good and perhaps even better.

Perhaps many years ago we might have had overreliance on antimicrobials, but we're finding many ways to counteract that.

When I graduated, veterinarians were involved primarily with emergency medicine and sick animal medicine and now, starting in the mid '80s, it's been very much a preventative mode. Our major focus is on prevention, and the amount of antimicrobials used is reduced dramatically.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Yet in the media or in advertising, we see all antimicrobials as a bad thing, as indicated by some of the fast-food chains. The public trust gets shaky because all the public knows is that antimicrobials are bad. We don't like antimicrobials.



If you said to your family, “You've got an infection, but I'm not going to let you take antibiotics”, it would make no sense from the human standpoint, but it seems to make more sense for people from an animal standpoint, because we don't want to buy any meat that comes from an animal that's been subjected to antimicrobials.

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** I understand what you're saying, but I would argue that we could make the argument to the public that, if we don't, it's an animal welfare issue. I think that's where the focus needs to be.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Thank you. That's very good.

Mr. Lee, it's great to have you from Regina. Thanks for dialing in.

It's very interesting to hear that your organization includes all the different types of stakeholders for and against. There was, in our current ag partnership agreements with the provinces and territories, an element of building public trust.

It seems like you have some experience in that area. How do you bring the groups together? Is that something where you have to draw on the support of the ag partnership, or is that something that you do outside of it? Could you maybe give me some context to that?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** Well, there are two streams.

NFACC and its core operations are funded by its members, a diverse group that includes animal welfare groups and production agriculture groups.

Then there are also the projects themselves, so when it comes to writing a code that is funded under the partnership, under Growing Forward 2 before, and under different frameworks all along.... That really helps bring some of those voices to the table. It allows for funding some things like public comment periods and processing all the comments.

The round table function of it is by the members, and the projects are more government funded.

• (1145)

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Is it too early to have an example in an annual report of how the code is being developed using your collaboration in partnership with the ag partnership funding? Is that something we could get hold of for our study?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** It is too early for this go-round. The CAP funding was announced two weeks ago or so.

There are progress and achievement reports from the National Farm Animal Care Council for several years past, and you could access those at the website, but as far as this current framework goes, we're in week two or three.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield:** Yes, I know. It wasn't a fair question, but could you tell us where you're going to head with that and maybe let us know after this meeting, so the rest of the country can learn some lessons in terms of how you're using the CAP funding to build up public trust using the collaborations you have?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** Absolutely. This project itself is around renewing the transport code, renewing the dairy cattle code, renewing the goat code and a new farmed finfish code, so it's specific to the projects that the funding is for.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

We'll give the floor to Ms. Nassif for six minutes.

**Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll share my speaking time with my colleague, Mr. Peschisolido.

I want to thank our witnesses for their presentation. My question is for Mr. Lee.

My name is Eva Nassif. I'm the member of Parliament for Vimy, a rural constituency in the municipality of Laval, Quebec. My constituency doesn't have any farmers, but it's home to a number of agri-food companies that need farmers.

You spoke—with great emotion—about the challenges involved in rearing animals. How could we maintain the viability of the agri-food industry in Canada while improving public confidence in animal welfare?

[English]

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** That's a large question.

A lot of it is being undertaken by a lot of associations and using some of the work that comes through the National Farm Animal Care Council. We have robust codes of practice that convey what is possible and what is required and recommended that producers do, then we have programs that can be used to check up on that, and then we have to be able to tell that story to the public and connect with the public.

Some of that is the biggest challenge. People who are farming and ranching look at social media and think it's a great way to connect, but a lot of times we're connecting with ourselves. The same goes with whatever circle of conversation you're talking about—it seems to be internal.

As much as we try to partner with retail and food service to answer the questions people have, it's not easy to lodge yourself in there and provide answers proactively, so we focus on what we can do on our farms and being available for anybody who has questions.

We even have public comment and public participation processes in development of these codes. We do all we can, but we can't always reach everybody in their own little worlds.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Could you describe a specific case where the code of ethics wasn't adhered to and what action was taken in this regard?

[English]

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** Well, like the doctor mentioned, it's a provincial undertaking, so you have your provincial regulatory bodies for the most part—although there are some federal cases as well—and it generally starts with a provincial enforcement body. It could be a veterinarian who notices something, or neighbours maybe, who notice that something isn't right here.

That's when a provincial enforcement body is generally contacted and starts to look into it. A lot of them will be social cases where maybe somebody was incapacitated, but some of them are bad stories. That's often when animals will be removed or taken custody of, and then it might proceed to charges being pressed and fines.

Some things will be a criminal matter and charged federally. It really is case by case, but that step of somebody finding out and reporting it and it then it being investigated from there is a common denominator. Then the code is referred to. They say, well, what was going on is this, whereas what is considered acceptable practice is this, and they compare the situation with the codes of practice.

● (1150)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Eva Nassif:** Thank you. I'll give the floor to my colleague.

[English]

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.):** I'm going to follow up a bit on this point about the viability of the industry and maintaining public trust.

What are the variables that go into the various codes? Pigs and chickens and cows are quite diverse, so can you talk a bit about what goes into the variables of the codes, and when you update them, what that means?

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** The commonality of them all is the cycle of life, so it's managing your animals before they're pregnant, during pregnancy, when they're giving birth and as the newborn arrives. It's things like feed and water, the environment they're raised in, and even managing end-of-life decisions and all the related things. That whole life cycle and all the effects on the life as it takes place provide the commonality between the different codes. There are lots of divergences, such as for animals that are raised indoors compared with those raised outdoors.

When it comes to renewal, a lot of that is based on the priority welfare issues of the day. Looking at the last time the code was done, there's usually a list of some of the hard topics or some of the areas where the science was lacking. Perhaps we wanted to make a decision on an issue but we looked for research on it and it wasn't there. The next time, we ask whether there has been any new stuff since. Has there been any research that's come out since the last one that should change it? It's an environmental scan of what the practices are now, what research has been done since, what was hanging from the last code, and it's a lot—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lee.

[Translation]

We'll move on to Mr. Berthold for six minutes.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Ceelen and Mr. Lee.

Mr. Lee, how long have you been at the National Farm Animal Care Council?

[English]

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** I've been chair for a little over four years now, and I started going to meetings in 2005.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Okay.

Why did the industry create an organization such as yours at the time?

[English]

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** Part of it was that there was an organization hosting some of the code writing in the 1990s and before, and that organization had ceased to exist or to be funded. The farm animal industries came together asking, "How are we going to handle this animal welfare conversation and codes of practice?" It was a coalescing and a coming together in the early 2000s, which predated my time at it, but like I said in my statement, it would be hard to imagine the industry without NFACC. At the same time, if NFACC hadn't started, I think something like it would have coalesced around that time too.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Given the growing presence of social media in recent years, do you see your role with the different groups that you work with as increasingly important?

[English]

**Mr. Ryder Lee:** It depends on the conversation. Each code of practice has a public comment period as its draft is moving along. Some of those codes have a lot of public comment, and some of them have quite a bit less. What's being implemented now is a survey at the start of the code-drafting process to see what the public is saying. Industry doesn't want to be seen as just doing these things themselves and minding their industry themselves. We want to have that public eyeball on things so that what we come out with at the end takes those things into consideration and that they are robust because of it.

● (1155)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Ceelen, you have extensive experience as a veterinarian and you've seen the public's view of how farmers, producers and breeders treat their animals evolve. What are the biggest differences between what you saw at the start of your career and what you're seeing now?

[English]

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** I think the biggest difference is that there's more awareness, both on the public end and in food animal agriculture, about the issues that are important to the public in general. Food safety and animal welfare, I think, are two big topics, big issues, with the public. I think that, for the most part, food animal agriculture has recognized that and is taking steps to address them. In the dairy industry, for example, as you may know, they have a program that's called proAction. They're trying to be proactive to address these issues.

I think one thing that's important for everyone here to realize is that animal welfare and financial viability are not mutually exclusive. As a matter of fact, I would argue that they're exactly the opposite. When I look at primarily dairy farms that I work for, the more we improve animal welfare, the more productive those animals are. It's absolutely a win-win situation, so they're not mutually exclusive at all. There's a real vested interest by our industry to improve animal welfare, because they see there's a real value for them beyond the public perception. I argue that the public perception is really critical.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** The producers have an emotional stake, which comes from the heart, and an economic stake in taking care of their animals.

I'll let Mr. Doherty ask a question.

[*English*]

**Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Thank you to the committee for allowing me to be here today. It's interesting to get that chance. I'm the shadow minister for fisheries, oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard; however, I'm in a landlocked area, and my family are farmers. We are primarily cow-calf producers as well as poultry producers in the south of British Columbia.

Very often, our farmers are unfairly targeted, I feel, by the proliferation of social media and outside interests that are targeting our way of life. Canadian farmers are some of the best in the world. Our products are wanted around the world because, sustainably and ethically, we grow good products. It was interesting in the meeting yesterday, and I'm glad that the farmed fish code was brought up.

I was in a meeting yesterday, and BSE was brought up. Even if it's a regional-based product, cattle products from Alberta are not seen as Alberta beef. It is a Canadian issue, so a concerted effort must be not just reactionary, but it must constant.

**The Chair:** You're pretty much done.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** I have a chance to grandstand. I applaud the committee for—

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** That was a short testimony.

**Mr. Todd Doherty:** Mr. Chair, I just want to say thank you to Mr. Lee and Mr. Ceelen. It's been very interesting for me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Doherty.

If the committee will allow me, I have a short question.

To clarify, when you're talking about antimicrobials in food or meat, what's the worry? Is it more that we are building superbugs, or is it that people are concerned about having that in their meal? I know that the poultry farmers would put it in right from the get-go, and they'd get faster....

Could you maybe touch on that?

**Dr. Henry Ceelen:** The issue is clearly one of antimicrobial resistance. We are already familiar with superbugs and people who become ill with conditions that would normally have been very responsive to antibiotic treatment and are not anymore.

Based on the research worldwide that's been done, they estimate that more people will die from superbugs. If we do nothing globally with respect to our prudent antimicrobial use, there are going to be more people dying from that than die from automobile accidents and cancer in the world by 2050.

It's not an insignificant issue, and it's all about superbugs.

•(1200)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Ceelen and Mr. Lee, for taking the time to be with us this morning. It was very interesting. It was the opening of our study, and I'm sure we will hear a lot more on it.

We will break and then come back for our business session.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]





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