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## Dairy Cows Need You

Here is a summary of the five key issues identified by the Montreal SPCA to advance the welfare of dairy cows and calves so that you can [comment on the Code of Practice](#) quickly and effectively in your own words!

### The five key welfare issues:

#### 1. Call for an end to the use of tie-stalls

Did you know that in Quebec, the vast majority of dairy cows spend their entire lives in tie stalls? This means they are kept permanently indoors, tethered by the neck, which severely restricts their movement and even prevents them from turning around.

Tie-stalls are used on 75% of Canadian farms<sup>1</sup> and are even more common in Quebec than in any other province.<sup>2</sup> In Quebec, there are currently 356,100 cows used in the dairy industry,<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of whom do not have access to the outdoors, are unable to move around freely or to express normal social behaviors. Deprived of any opportunity to graze, groom each other, and socialize, dairy cows frequently exhibit stereotypic behaviors as a manifestation of their suffering.<sup>4</sup>

Despite all this, the new Code of Practice continues to allow the use of tie-stalls.

**In your own words, call for an end to the use of tie-stalls in section 2.2.3: Facilities and Housing – Lactating and Dry Cows.**

- Dairy cows must have year-round access to outdoor yards or pasture and be provided the opportunity to express normal social and grazing behaviors.
- If housed indoors, cows must be kept in loose housing (i.e., not tethered) allowing them basic freedom of movement.
- Permanent tethering must immediately be eliminated.

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<sup>1</sup> [OSCII Activity D.43 - Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada - Dalhousie University](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Portrait-diagnostic sectoriel de l'industrie laitière québécoise \(gouv.qc.ca\)](#) p.17

<sup>3</sup> [Production laitière \(lait de vache\) | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Behaviour of dairy cows kept in extensive \(loose housing/pasture\) or intensive \(tie stall\) environments. III. Grooming, exploration and abnormal behaviour - ScienceDirect](#)

- If you are a consumer of dairy products, indicate that the continued use of tie-stalls will impact your product choices.

## **2. Demand group housing for calves**

It is standard practice in Canada to remove calves born to dairy cows from their mothers within their first few hours of life and to keep them in complete isolation for several months. Yet studies indicate that housing young calves alone causes stress and can even lead to abnormal development<sup>5</sup>.

The draft Code of Practice requires group housing of calves 2 to 4 weeks of age starting in 2033. An eleven-year phase-out period is far too long for the elimination of an unacceptable practice that affects the lives of hundreds of thousands of calves each year.

**In your own words, demand that calves be housed with conspecifics from the age of two weeks, effective immediately in section 2.2.1: Facilities and Housing – Calves Pre-Weaning.**

- Social animals should never be raised in solitary confinement.
- The welfare of calves is a priority. Improving their living conditions cannot wait.
- If you are a consumer of dairy products, indicate that how the Code of practice deals with individual housing of calves will have an impact on your product choices.

## **3. Require detailed guidance for the transportation of cull cows prior to slaughter.**

After being used to produce milk for their entire lives, cows are typically sent to auction and then slaughter at about five years of age. The Code of Practice does not regulate transport per se, but it should provide detailed guidance regarding the steps to take prior to transportation. The Code should require that cows be dried off of their milk production before they are transported to slaughter. Currently, cows are frequently sent on lengthy transport while pregnant or still lactating, which causes discomfort and increases the likelihood of developing painful physical conditions such as mastitis.

The Code must also clearly prohibit injured, compromised, or unfit animals to be transported, rather than allowing the transport of these animals “with special arrangements”.

**In your own words, require better protection for cull cows prior to transport in section 6.1: Preparations for Transportation – Pre-Transport Decision Making.**

- Steps must be taken to ensure cows are no longer producing milk before they are transported.
- Cows must be given the opportunity to exercise in the weeks prior to transport so they are able to withstand transport.
- Only animals fit for transport should be transported, no exceptions.

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<sup>5</sup> [Key animal welfare issues in commercially raised dairy calves: social environment, nutrition, and painful procedures \(cdnsciencepub.com\)](https://cdnsciencepub.com)

- The criteria for fitness for transport must be clearly defined.

#### **4. Ask that all dairy farms have an emergency plan in place.**

All dairy farms should have robust emergency preparedness and response plans to ensure the safety and welfare of animals in case of a fire, natural disaster or delay in the production line. Yet the draft Code of Practice includes no such requirement.

#### **In your own words, require that emergency plans be mandatory in Section 2.11: Facilities and Housing – Emergencies and Safety.**

- With the frequency of natural disasters likely to increase, emergency plans must become a priority.
- Animal evacuation strategies must be planned with government authorities in anticipation of possible fires or natural disasters.
- Measures must be in place to ensure animal welfare in the midst of a labor dispute or a public health emergency, such as a pandemic, that slows down the production line.

#### **5. Demand that calves be allowed to stay with their mothers**

Like all mammals, cows must give birth in order to produce milk. The standard practice in the dairy industry is to remove the calf from his or her mother within the first few hours of life. The calf is then fed milk replacer and the cow is milked for human consumption. Cow-calf separation causes significant and repeated psychological suffering to dairy cows, as well as to their calves.

Many countries around the world are rethinking their dairy production to allow for prolonged cow-calf cohabitation and European certifications are being developed in this area.<sup>6</sup> Yet the draft Code of Practice completely ignores this issue, even though the scientific report on which it is based highlights the important animal welfare benefits of cow-calf cohabitation.

#### **In your own words, demand that calves be allowed to stay with their mothers.**

- The industry needs to thoroughly rethink its cow-calf separation practices in light of emerging scientific knowledge and consumer concerns.
- The separation of cows and calves is a major area of concern for you.
- The practice of cow-calf separation has a crucial impact on consumer trust and is an animal welfare issue that can no longer be ignored.
- If you are a consumer of dairy products, indicate that how the Code of practice deals with cow-calf separation will impact your product choices.

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<sup>6</sup> [Et si on ne séparait plus les veaux laitiers des mères? | Radio-Canada.ca](#)

**Summary of key comments to submit in appropriate sections of the survey:**

- **In Section 2.2.1 Facilities and Housing – Calves Pre-weaning**

**Demand in your own words that calves be housed in groups**

Calves should be housed in groups starting at two weeks of age.  
This change must be implemented immediately.

- **In Section 2.2.3 Facility and Housing - Lactating and Dry Cows**

**Call for an end to the use of tie-stalls in your own words**

Cows should have year-round access to the outdoors.  
Housing systems should allow basic freedom of movement.  
Cows need to be able to express their normal social behaviours.

- **In section 2.11 Facilities and Housing - Emergencies and Safety**

**Demand in your own words that all dairy farms have an emergency plan in place**

Robust emergency plans should be prepared in collaboration with the competent authorities.  
Plans should include measures to evacuate animals in the event of a fire or natural disaster.  
Strategies should be in place to ensure animal welfare can be maintained in the event of slowdowns in the production line.

- **In Section 6.1 Preparations for Transportation - Pre-transport Decision Making**

**Require in your own words better protection for cull cows prior to slaughter**

Cows should have stopped producing milk prior to transport.  
Unfit animals should not be transported.  
Criteria for fitness for transport must be clearly defined in the Code.

- **In the last section General Comments on the Code**

**Demand here that cows and calves no longer be separated**

Cows and calves should be kept together.  
The dairy industry must evolve in light of emerging scientific knowledge and consumer concerns.

**You have until January 27, 2022 to [submit your personalized comments](#) to advance the welfare of dairy cows and calves.**