



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Draft of Canada's first rabbit Code of Practice released for public comment

(Lacombe, AB) 30 January 2017 – The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) and the Syndicat des producteurs de lapins du Québec (SPLQ), working in partnership with other provincial rabbit groups, are pleased to announce the **launch of the public comment period on the draft *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Rabbits***. The public comment period allows stakeholders – producers, consumers, and others with an interest in the welfare of rabbits – to view the draft Code and provide input to the final Code.

The draft Code and the public comment system are now accessible at: www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/rabbits. All comments must be submitted through the online system. The public comment period **closes March 31, 2017**. The Code Development Committee will consider the submitted comments after the close of the comment period, and the plan is that the final rabbit Code of Practice will be released by the end of 2017.

Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals are the result of a unique consensus-based, multi-stakeholder approach used across various agricultural sectors, which brings together all relevant stakeholders with responsibility for animal care standards.

A Scientific Committee report summarizing research conclusions on priority welfare topics can be found online alongside the draft Code. This peer-reviewed report aided the discussions of the Code Development Committee as it prepared the draft Code of Practice. The report, developed by scientists familiar with rabbit welfare, should be reviewed prior to making a submission.

“The Code Development Committee has worked hard since 2014 developing the draft Code. The public comment period will allow us to check our work with a broader representative group,” said Maxime Tessier, rabbit producer, Vice President of the SPLQ, and Chair of the Code Development Committee. “Since this is the first Code for rabbits in Canada and it will fall primarily to producers to implement it, constructive input from rabbit producers is very important,” he added.

Once finalized, the revised Code will promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, care, transportation, and other animal husbandry practices. The SPLQ, working in partnership with other provincial rabbit groups, initiated the Code's development in December 2014, utilizing NFACC's Code development process.

“The Code development process helps diverse communities work together to improve the lives of farmed animals,” said Meghann Cant of the BC SPCA, who represents the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies on the Code Committee. “We hope to receive broad input from the general public, industry and other stakeholders to ensure this Code improves animal welfare and reflects the values of Canadians.”

The Code's revision is led by a 12-person Code Development Committee that includes participants from across Canada including producers, animal welfare and enforcement representatives, researchers, veterinarians, and

government representatives. More information on the Code development process is available at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.

The rabbit Code is one of five Codes of Practice being developed as part of a multi-year NFACC project. Codes of Practice serve as our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices. It is important that Codes be scientifically informed, implementable by producers, and reflect societal expectations for responsible farm animal care. The Codes cover housing, feed and water, handling, euthanasia, transport, and other important management practices.

Funding for this project has been provided through the AgriMarketing Program under Growing Forward 2, a federal–provincial–territorial initiative.

About the National Farm Animal Care Council

NFACC is a collaborative partnership of diverse stakeholders that work together on farm animal care and welfare. It supports robust processes to draft or renew Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals. NFACC would like to acknowledge the Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC) for their role in securing funding for this project. For more information on NFACC visit www.nfacc.ca.

About the Syndicat des producteurs de lapins du Québec

The Syndicat des producteurs de lapins du Québec (SPLQ) is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organization representing Québec's rabbit producers. The SPLQ was founded in 1979 by and for farmers involved in rabbit production. The provincial organization, which is affiliated with the [Union des producteurs agricoles \(UPA\)](http://www.upa.qc.ca), has its headquarters in Longueuil. For further information on the SPLQ, visit www.lapinquébec.qc.ca.

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