

**Presentation to Standing Committee on Agriculture and Food
Province of Manitoba
regarding the
Animal Care Amendment Act
Tuesday, March 17, 2009**

My name is Twyla Francois. I'm Head of Investigation for Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Food Animals (CETFA) and Central Region Director with the Canadian Horse Defence Coalition. Before working with CETFA I was Head of Investigation for Animals' Angels Canada.

I have been documenting violations of the Animal Care Act in Manitoba since 2005, have submitted numerous reports to the Minister of Agriculture, Rosann Wowchuk, and her Office of the Chief Veterinarian. Not one case which I extensively documented, provided full video and photo evidence and complete information on has resulted in ANY penalties to the perpetrators. This has been an incredibly frustrating experience. It is also in complete contrast to my experience with other provincial governments. In fact, each and every report I have submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture has resulted in penalties, changes in practices and policies, direct immediate improvements and even in University research being commissioned to investigate findings of my reports.

My primary concern with this government's inclusion of Section 5.1.2.(b) - the amendment which would make the movement, loading and transportation of non-ambulatory animals or those who are too sick, injured or diseased to walk to be taken to slaughter, is the fact that when we questioned the Office of the Chief Veterinarian about this amendment, we were told that it was included simply to "entrench current practices". The practice of loading and transporting non-ambulatory animals is illegal according to federal transport regulations. Surely the Ministry's office is aware of this, yet acknowledges that it is in fact common practice in Manitoba. Rather than including an amendment which would strictly forbid this common practice, they instead chose to codify it.

Manitoba's non-ambulatory animals are most often the cull sows and boars (or breeding pigs) that have spent their entire adult lives in intensive confinement systems such as gestation crates. This intensive confinement leads to the development of arthritis in 80% of the pigs, pneumonia in 70%, open and often festering ulcers on their pressure points from laying on concrete, and makes the animals more prone to fractures of their hips and limbs at point of transport (as high as 12%). These pigs are at a disadvantage when moving and loading as they are often slower than the others. This lagging puts them at risk for abuse such as kicking, hitting and the shoving of electric prods up their vaginas and anuses (this has also been documented and gone unpunished).

These sows and boars are most frequently shipped to slaughterhouses in the mid-west U.S. to states where no anti-dragging of downer legislation exists. In one instance, I trailed a downer sow en route to slaughter from the Brandon area. She passed the perfunctory border inspection and continued to Johnsonville Sausage in Watertown, Wisconsin. There, she was electrically prodded 11 times and dragged off the trailer to the slaughterhouse floor.

While I've provided numerous cases of the loading of non-ambulatory animals, one case in particular is reflective of long-standing practices in Manitoba. At Manitoba Pork Marketing Cooperative I documented the leaving of non-ambulatory sows and boars overnight at the facility, with no food, water, bedding or medical treatment. The survivors were then taken to Maple Leaf for slaughter before the CFIA inspector arrived. Regulations stipulate that these animals be euthanized on the spot to spare their suffering. It was in fact an employee of the Office of the Chief Veterinarian who informed me of problems at the facility and asked me to collect evidence, which I did. Still, nothing was done. The facility eventually closed, not because the government had demanded it but because too many Winnipeggers had been recording and documenting incidents at the facility. I was assured the facility

would remain closed, however we have just been told that it is in fact opening again – this time away from the prying eyes of Winnipeggers, to the more remote location of Stonewall.

As I'm restricted for time I will not go into the cases of Emily the dairy cow with the twisted stomach discovered at Winnipeg Livestock Auction, or Beth the downer sow with acute arthritis at Grunthal Livestock Auction, but please read about them in the handouts I've provided. In both cases, full information and clear evidence was provided to officials. Again, nothing was done.

This Amendment does little to nothing to improve conditions for these animals as once again farm animals are exempt, “accepted practices” are exempt (and these would include things such as PACing or pounding against concrete which is used to hopefully kill piglets – although very often it does not; the breaking of boars' teeth which research has shown have innervated pulp canals as ours do; the intense deprivation and confinement of sows and boars in crates barely larger than themselves which do not allow them to turn around or stretch their limbs; and the use of electric prods which inevitably are used on the animals' faces and genitals.

In contrast - when these issues were presented to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, that government took the opportunity to make real and concrete improvements. While Ontario has four Acts that protect farm animals, Manitoba has one and farm animals are excluded. In Ontario, it is nearly impossible for a downer or non-ambulatory animal to be dragged from the salesbarn as lay inspectors are trained by the Agriculture Ministry, and are in attendance at each and every livestock sale. The inspectors view every animal and tag those that are injured or suffering. A veterinarian trained by the Agriculture Ministry then attends each auction to treat and euthanize the tagged animals. While Ontario has the same number of inspectors as Manitoba, they have double the number of auctions yet they somehow manage to ensure the welfare of all animals in their auction system. Also in Ontario, each auction has been provided with captive bolt pistols and training to euthanize any suffering animals. Captive bolt pistols are the most effective and safest method of euthanasia available for most animals. For those who it is inappropriate (horses, for example), the veterinarian will use an anaesthetic and injection such as Euthanol.

When I met with senior representatives from the Manitoba Agriculture Ministry and asked what improvements they have planned, I was told that no new animal protection officers would be hired, no forms of euthanasia or training would be provided to livestock auctions and no structural changes were planned. Nothing beyond this Amendment was offered.

This is an opportunity that Manitoba Agriculture must take to enforce current regulations, develop clear and practical regulations for livestock auctions and collecting stations, and develop a system of inspections that ensures injured and down animals are euthanized as they should be rather than put through the agony of transportation. I am always very happy to report improvements and cooperation but have not yet had the opportunity to do so in Manitoba.

Thank you.