

Humane Handling Guidelines for **SHEEP**

Standards for the Care of Compromised and Unfit Animals



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“The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association endorses the standards of humane care practices for sheep as set out in these guidelines.”

– Dr. Darrell Dalton, Registrar,

Alberta Veterinary Medical Association 

“We support the standards of humane care for sheep set out in these guidelines. The standards will be a valuable educational tool for our peace officers to use in their discussions with sheep owners and handlers.”

– Terra Johnston, Executive Director, Alberta SPCA



Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (©2013) have been used with permission from the Canadian Sheep Federation and the National Farm Animal Care Council. www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep

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(afac.ab.ca) and Alberta Lamb Producers (ablamb.ca)
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that support this initiative.

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Disclaimer

The primary purpose of this handbook is to assist people involved in the handling and transport of sheep to make responsible animal care decisions. It is important to note that while the authors have made every effort to ensure accuracy and completeness this should not be considered the final word on the areas of law and practice. Seek the advice of appropriate professionals and experts as the facts of each situation may differ from those set out here. All information is provided entirely “as is” and the authors make no representations, warranties or conditions, either express or implied, in connection with the use of or reliance upon this information. The information is provided to the recipient entirely at the risk of the recipient and, because the recipient assumes full responsibility, the authors shall not be liable for any claims, damages or losses of any kind based on any theory of liability rising out of the use of reliance upon this information (including omissions, inaccuracies, typographical errors and infringing of third party rights). Expert, professional, legal or veterinary advice should be referenced by the reader on a case-by-case basis. This handbook is subject to updates, revisions and modifications at any time.

ALERT

ALERT is a confidential call line for anyone to report livestock care concerns.

ALERT strives to assist before livestock are in distress.

ALERT Resource Team includes farmers and other rural community members. They offer solutions to improve livestock care.

ALERT has an ALERT veterinarian program that provides knowledgeable counsel.

ALERT informs members of the public that farmers do care for their animals.

ALERT is available for self-reporting to assist those who may be experiencing problems in caring for their livestock.

ALERT works with the Alberta SPCA and RCMP.

LIVESTOCK CARE ALERT

Help Line & Resource Team

To report livestock care concerns **CALL 1-800-506-2273**

afac.ab.ca Supported by Alberta's Livestock Industry



To report suspected animal neglect or abuse:

Alberta SPCA 800-455-9003

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Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook provides those directly involved in the handling of sheep (farm staff, producers, handlers, auction market personnel and processors) with the information needed to make humane handling decisions involving the care and transport of compromised or unfit animals.

The Humane Handling Guidelines are intended to complement existing regulations and standards by highlighting key obligations as they relate to compromised or unfit animals. Consult the regulations for other important animal care obligations. For more information about on-farm animal care, consult the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep* (2013) which includes a chapter on pre-transport decision-making and other on-farm requirements and recommendations. Alberta Lamb Producers' website (ablamb.ca) provides a number of resources on animal care and flock health management.

About the Alberta Farm Animal Care Association

The Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC) was started in 1993 by Alberta livestock producers. AFAC now serves as the collective voice of the Alberta livestock industry on matters of farm animal welfare and provides a coordinated approach for all areas of livestock production to work together to advance and promote responsible livestock care. More information is available at afac.ab.ca.

About Alberta Lamb Producers

Alberta Lamb Producers (ALP) is a not-for-profit organization, which is supported and governed by sheep and lamb producers. ALP is committed to the building a viable and sustainable industry in Alberta. To further this goal, ALP supports initiatives that will help sheep and lamb producers provide excellent care to their animals, including during transport. ALP acknowledges the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep* as the national understanding of responsible animal care on sheep farms in Canada. More information about Alberta Lamb Producers is available at ablamb.ca.

Section 1 – Monitoring Animal Health

Treatment or culling in the early stages of a disorder is the most effective way of reducing animal suffering, problems during transport, and carcass condemnation at processing. If you are in doubt about an animal's health, consult a veterinarian.

This booklet provides some details on common health conditions that would affect whether an animal should be transported, but it is not intended to be a health manual. Any time an animal shows signs of illness or pain, do not transport until you are sure the condition will not cause suffering during handling, loading and transport.

Before loading, check every animal for signs of illness and/or pain.

Some examples of signs of illness in sheep:

- depressed appetite and/or not coming up to feeder or standing at feeder but not eating
- separated from the group or slow to get up to follow the flock
- depressed (dull eyes, droopy ears, head hanging down)

Some examples of signs of pain in sheep:

- reluctant to stand or move
- restlessness (frequent lying down and getting up, shifting weight, pacing)
- rapid and shallow breathing
- stomp or kick at the belly
- altered gait

Section 2 – Overview of Applicable Standards and Regulations

Codes of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals

Codes of Practice are intended to promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, health management, transport and other animal husbandry practices. Code Requirements refer to either a regulatory requirement or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices and are fundamental obligations relating to the care of animals.

All Codes of Practice, including the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep* (2013) and the *transport Code of Practice*, are available at nfacc.ca.

Alberta Animal Protection Act

Provincial animal protection legislation in Alberta prohibits causing distress to an animal. Under *Alberta's Animal Protection Act*, an animal is in distress if it is 1(2)(a) deprived of adequate shelter, ventilation, space, food, water or veterinary care or reasonable protection from injurious heat or cold; (b) injured, sick, in pain or suffering, or; (c) abused or subjected to undue hardship, privation or neglect. This does not apply to activities carried out in accordance with “reasonable and generally accepted practices” of animal care. A court may consider the relevant Code of Practice when determining what is reasonable and generally accepted.

Federal and Provincial Transport Regulations

Requirements for animal transport are covered under the federal *Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII* and *Alberta's Animal Protection Regulation* (203/2005). *Federal Health of Animals Regulations* state that **whoever loads or causes to be loaded, or transports or causes**

to be transported, may be held liable in cases when there are problems with the transportation of livestock. The producer, shipper, transporter, transport company, and/or receiver can all be charged under humane transport laws.

The Criminal Code of Canada

The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits anyone from causing suffering, unnecessary pain or injury to an animal or bird, whether through willful action or neglect. The Criminal Code expressly states that it is an offence to, by wilful neglect, cause damage or injury to animals or birds while they are being driven or conveyed (i.e. transported).

Federal Food and Drugs Act

Canada's Food and Drugs Act prohibits the sale of food that 4(1)(a) has in or on it any poisonous or harmful substance; and/or 4(1)(b) is unfit for human consumption.

Producers and owners will not be paid for animals that are condemned at the plant. A condemned animal may have one or more of the following:

- drug residue from antibiotics or other drug
- a temperature above 104.5°F (40°C)
- a body condition score of 1
- a disease that renders the carcass unfit for human consumption.

2.1 – Evaluating Fitness for Transport

Under federal law, it is the responsibility of the party that is loading or transporting animals (or causing animals to be loaded or transported) to ensure that all animals are fit for the intended journey.

Unfit animal – DO NOT TRANSPORT

An animal with a reduced capacity to withstand transportation and where there is a high risk that transportation will lead to undue suffering. Unfit animals, if transported, would endure unjustified and unreasonable suffering.

Non-ambulatory animals – DO NOT TRANSPORT

An animal that is unable to stand without assistance or to move without being dragged or carried, regardless of size or age. Non-ambulatory animals are also called “downers”. A non-ambulatory animal is considered unfit for transport and can ONLY be transported for veterinary treatment or diagnosis on the advice of a veterinarian (*Health of Animals Regulations*, 138 [2.1, 2.2]).

Compromised Animals – TRANSPORT LOCALLY WITH SPECIAL PROVISIONS

An animal with reduced capacity to withstand transportation but where transportation with special provisions will not lead to undue suffering. Compromised animals may be locally transported with special provisions to receive care, be euthanized or humanely slaughtered.

What is meant by Special Provisions?

- Transport locally and directly to the nearest suitable place (not through an auction or assembly yard)
- Load the compromised animal last and unload it first
- Segregate the compromised animal from other animals
- Other special provisions may be required, such as additional bedding. In some cases it may be appropriate to pen the compromised animal with one familiar animal.

If compromised animals are to be sent to slaughter, they must not travel long distances to the slaughter facility, even if the only slaughter facility is far away. If local slaughter facilities are unavailable, animals should either be treated or be humanely euthanized.

DO NOT ship animals that may be classified as “unfit to undergo transport.”
Use this booklet to help define whether the animal is fit to be transported.

2.2 – Animals that are Sick, Injured or Otherwise Unfit

Federal and provincial regulations prohibit loading or transporting of animals that because of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause would suffer unduly during transport.

Unfit animals can ONLY be transported for veterinary treatment or diagnosis.

Regulations

Health of Animals Regulations

138(2)(a) No person shall load or cause to be loaded on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no one shall transport or cause to be transported an animal that by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.

138(2.1) For the purpose of paragraph (2)(a), a non-ambulatory animal is an animal that cannot be transported without undue suffering during the expected journey.

138(2.2) Despite paragraph (2)(a), a non-ambulatory animal may be transported for veterinary treatment or diagnosis on the advice of a veterinarian.

Alberta Animal Protection Act

2(1) No person shall cause or permit an animal of which the person is the owner or the person in charge to be or to continue to be in distress.

2(1.1) No person shall cause an animal to be in distress

2.1 A person who owns or is in charge of an animal (b) must provide the animal with adequate care when the animal is wounded or ill.

Alberta Animal Protection Regulation (203/2005)

8 No person shall unload any livestock at a livestock market or livestock assembling station that, by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or other cause, is unable to stand or is unduly suffering.

10(1) No person shall load or transport animals that, by reason of infirmity, illness, injury, fatigue or any other cause, would suffer unduly during transport.

10(2) Despite subsection (1), a person may transport animals to or from a veterinary clinic, a designated confinement area or the nearest suitable place to deal with health concerns as long as the animal is loaded and transported humanely.

An animal that is injured or becomes ill or otherwise unfit for transport while en route must be taken to the nearest suitable place (such as a nearby veterinary hospital, farm, slaughter plant) where the animal can receive care or be euthanized.

Regulations

Health of Animals Regulations

138(4) No railway company or motor carrier shall continue to transport an animal that is injured or becomes ill or otherwise unfit for transport during a journey beyond the nearest suitable place at which it can receive proper care and attention.

Alberta Animal Protection Regulation (203/2005)

10(3) No person shall continue to transport an animal that becomes injured, ill or otherwise unfit for transport during a journey beyond

the nearest suitable place where it can receive proper care and attention.

Code of Practice

Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (2013)

Requirement under Section 6.1.1 Fitness for Transport

- The fitness for transport of every animal must be evaluated within the context of each trip.
- Sheep with injury or obvious clinical signs of disease must not be sent to auction or other sales.

In addition to federal and provincial regulations, the Code of Practice outlines the following requirements for the on-farm care of sick or injured sheep.

Code of Practice

Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (2013)

Requirement under Section 4.4 Sick, Injured or Cull Animals

- All stockpeople must be knowledgeable of normal sheep behaviour and signs of illness, injury and disease; or work in conjunction with an experienced stockperson.
- Stockpeople must not cause, nor allow, unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress by leaving a sheep to suffer.
- Sick, injured, or diseased sheep must receive prompt treatment and nursing care, or be euthanized immediately. The treatment must be appropriate for the condition. If in doubt about the sheep's health or the most effective treatment, consult a veterinarian without delay.
- For sick, injured, or diseased sheep that are not responding to treatment producers must, without delay, obtain veterinary

advice on appropriate care and treatment or euthanize the sheep.

- Monitoring of sick, injured or diseased sheep must be appropriate for the condition and at least daily.
- Sick, injured, or diseased animals must be segregated where it is advantageous for treatment or to limit disease transmission.

2.3 Handling Sheep

Regulations and Codes of Practice also define what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of animal handling. Humane handling must be used - federal and provincial regulations prohibit handling animals in a way that is likely to cause injury or undue suffering.

Regulations

Health of Animals Regulations

139 (1) No person shall beat an animal being loaded or unloaded in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to it.

139 (2) No person shall load or unload, or cause to be loaded or unloaded, an animal in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to it.

Alberta Animal Protection Regulation (203/2005)

12 (1) No person shall load or unload livestock in a manner that is likely to cause injury or undue suffering to it.

12 (3) No person shall beat or, by use of a prod, goad or other instrument, cause injury to livestock being loaded into or unloaded from a vehicle.

Code of Practice

Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (2013)

Requirements under Section 5.1 Handling, Grouping and Moving Animals

- All stockpeople must be competent in sheep handling techniques and have an understanding of sheep behaviour, or be under the direct supervision of an experienced stockperson.
- Stockpeople must work calmly and quietly with sheep at all times; this includes minimizing noise (e.g. from people, herding dogs and equipment) as much as possible.
- Sheep must be handled at all times in such a way as to minimize the risk of pain, injury, or distress. For example sheep must not be:
 - ⇒ dragged or lifted by the fleece, tail, legs, ears, neck or horns
 - ⇒ grabbed by the fleece
 - ⇒ held on their side or back for more than a few minutes at a time especially if the rumen is full or if they are heavily pregnant.
- Electric prods are ineffective and must not be used on sheep.
- Mistreating animals is unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to: kicking, striking, slamming gates on sheep.
- Stockpeople using dogs to move sheep must be trained to handle dogs, or be under the supervision of a trained dog handler.
- Dogs must be under good command and must not be allowed to force the sheep too fast nor to continue to force the sheep when they have nowhere to go.
- Dogs must not be allowed to nip or bite the sheep.
- Dogs must not be allowed to work the sheep without the handler present.

2.4 Segregating Sheep in Transport

To prevent injury or undue suffering during transport, sheep must be segregated as follows:

Regulations

Health of Animals Regulations

141 (1) Subject to this section, no person shall load on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no carrier shall transport animals of different species or of substantially different weight or age unless those animals are segregated.

141(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a female animal and its suckling offspring.

141(4) Animals of the same species that are incompatible by nature shall be segregated during transport.

141(5) Groups of bulls, de-tusked boars, rams and goat bucks, if mature, shall be segregated from all other animals during transport.

Alberta Animal Protection Regulation (203/2005)

15 A person transporting livestock must segregate the livestock during transport as follows: (a) livestock of the same species that are incompatible by nature and livestock of different species are segregated from one another; (b) groups of mature bulls, de-tusked boars, rams and goat bucks are segregated from all other livestock; (f) livestock of the same species but of substantially different weight or age are segregated from one another.

Section 3 – Should this Animal Be Loaded?

See also Appendix A – Guidelines for Dealing with Compromised Sheep. A more detailed list of sheep diseases (including identification of zoonotic diseases) can be found in the National Sheep Producers Biosecurity Planning Guide (www.inspection.gc.ca).

Conditions Affecting Ewes

Below are some examples of conditions affecting ewes. Other conditions that potentially affect ewes and that cause signs of disorientation (hypocalcaemia and pregnancy toxemia) are outlined on page 28. For information on prolapses, refer to page 27.

LIKELY TO LAMB OR LAMBED WITHIN PREVIOUS 48 HOURS

Check Points:

- Heavily pregnant ewes – firm teats, slack, swollen vulva.
- Ewe has separated from the flock.
- Full looking udder or dried blood or mucus on vulva and under tail.

Management Options:

- Ewes that have lambled within the last 48 hours or that are likely to give birth in transit – do not transport. Delay transport.



Regulations

HEALTH OF ANIMALS REGULATIONS

138(2) – Subject to subsection (3) no person shall load or cause to be loaded on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no one shall transport or cause to be transported an animal (c) if it is probable that the animal will give birth during the journey.

ALBERTA ANIMAL PROTECTION REGULATION (203/2005)

Transportation of Animals 12(2) – No person shall load or transport livestock that is likely to give birth during transport unless the livestock is being transported for health reasons.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirements under Section 5.1.1 Pregnancy, Lambing and Neonatal Care

If it is probable that an animal will give birth during the journey, they must not be transported.

Requirements under Section 6.1.3 Preparing Sheep for Transport

Lactating dairy ewes must be milked out immediately before being transported.

Heavily lactating ewes must be dried off before shipping to auction/collection yards unless they have suckling lambs accompanying them, or are intended for a production/replacement sale.

MASTITIS

Check Points:

- Inflammation and infection of udder.
- Ewe may appear lame in hind leg due to swollen or painful udder.

Management Options:

- Acute – do not transport. Delay transport, provide prompt treatment and reassess.
- Gangrenous (blue bag) mastitis – do not transport. Euthanize or treat.



Conditions Related to Extreme Temperatures

COLD STRESSED OR FROSTBITE

To prevent cold stress or frostbite, consider using a comb lifter to leave an insulating layer of wool if shearing takes place in poor weather conditions or shelter is limited.

Check Points:

- Exposed to inclement weather for an extended period of time.
- Shivering, hunched back.
- Higher risk if recently shorn or animal is thin (body condition score of 2 out of 5).

Management Options:

- Delay transport – provide prompt care.
- If transporting: transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard) with bedding and wind protection for short haul transport.
- Ensure receiver has facility with protection from elements.



Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirement under Section 5.4 Shearing and Crutching

When planning shearing, producers must take the time of year, expected weather, local insect season and available shelter into consideration and take steps to prevent the potential negative outcomes associated with shearing (e.g. hypothermia, sunburn, biting insects, health problems).

Requirement under Section 6.1.1 Fitness for Transport

Producers must take expected weather conditions into consideration when making shipping arrangements.

HEAT STRESSED/ DEHYDRATED/EXHAUSTED

Check Points:

- Continual panting.
- Rapid breathing.
- Weakness, inability to stand, head down.
- Elevated rectal temperature.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – delay, provide appropriate care and reassess.
- Provide shade and access to clean drinking water, avoid handling and moving of sheep and allow them to rest.
- Shear in appropriate shearing season.

When recovered:

- Transport at night (cooler temperatures).
- Reduce stocking density (to improve on-board ventilation).
- Take precautions if transporting in high ambient temperatures.

Code of Practice

*CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE
AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)*

Requirement under Section 6.1.1 Fitness for Transport

Producers must take expected weather conditions into consideration when making shipping arrangements.



Gastro-Intestinal Disruption

Conditions affecting the digestive system will cause signs of gastro-intestinal disruption. Common signs and conditions are listed in this section.

Check Points:

- Sheep may be lethargic, off-feed, separated from the flock or show other signs of pain (e.g. hunched pack, kicking at the belly).
- May show fever ($>39.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ [103.3°F]).
- May show diarrhea (fecal staining under tail).

Management Options:

- Do not transport – delay until cause is determined and treated or euthanize.



BLOAT

Check Points:

- Gas buildup in rumen.
- Left side of abdomen distended (looks “too full”).

Management Options:

- If no pain or weakness – transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- If weak or down – do not transport. Treat or euthanize.



Injury, Open Wound or Lesions

Any sign of injury needs to be investigated further. Below are a few examples of specific injuries as well as conditions that may lead to injury in sheep.

Checkpoints: Compromised

- Minor, recent injury (no infection).

Management Options:

- Transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).

Check Points: Unfit

Significant wounds / blood loss (e.g. predation).

Management Options:

- Do not transport – euthanize or treat.



CONTAGIOUS ECTHYMA (ORF)

Check Points:

- Lesions around the mouth, skin above the hooves, udder.
- Transmissible to humans – use precaution when handling.

Management Options:

- If mild – transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- If severe – do not transport. Delay and treat.



FLYSTRIKE

Check Points:

- Maggot infestation of open wounds.
- Foul smell.
- Causes severe irritation (animal tries to rub or bite affected area).

Management Options:

- If stable – transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- If severe – euthanize or treat.

Code of Practice

*CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE
AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)*

Requirements under Section 4.4.1 Fly-Strike

Sheep affected by fly-strike must receive prompt treatment.



FRACTURES

Check Points: Compromised

- Fracture of the jaw, spine, pelvis or limb or any fracture that would cause severe pain during loading or transport.
- Animal has trouble rising and will not bear weight on affected limb.
- Animal shows other signs of pain – muscle trembling or grinding of teeth.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – euthanize.



Lame or Non-Ambulatory (Downer)

Check Points: Compromised

- Lameness class 1 – Visibly lame but can keep up with the group
- Lameness class 2 – Unable to keep up; some difficulty climbing ramps
- Lameness, even if slight, can deteriorate quickly in transit.

Management Options:

- Transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- Or delay transport and treat.

Check Points: Unfit

- Lameness class 3 – requires assistance to rise but can walk freely.
- Lameness class 4 – requires assistance to rise; reluctant to walk; halted movement.
- Lameness class 5 – unable to rise or remain standing.
- Non-ambulatory animals: Unable to stand without assistance, or move without being dragged or carried (downers).

Management Options:

- Do not lift or drag an animal.
- Do not transport – euthanize.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirements under Section 4.4.3 Lameness

Producers must monitor flock closely for lame sheep.

Stockpeople must be able to recognize lameness, assess severity and take prompt action to resolve the lameness as quickly as possible.

Producers must avoid maintaining sheep in wet or muddy conditions for long periods of time.

Producers must consult their flock veterinarian regarding appropriate treatment and control strategies, which may include pain control.

Chronically lame sheep must be culled (see above lameness classes), euthanized or under the direct care of a veterinarian.



Reportable Diseases

Checkpoints

- Signs of reportable diseases vary by disease.
- Look for staggering, depression, aggression, oral erosions, abortion, blindness, trembling or any other suspicious sign.

Management Options

- Do not transport.
- Contact a veterinarian or the CFIA immediately.
- Use caution when handling – some diseases are transmissible from animals to humans.



Regulations

REPORTABLE DISEASES REGULATIONS

Reportable diseases are listed in the federal *Reportable Diseases Regulations*. In addition, provincially reportable and notifiable diseases are listed in *Alberta's Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation*.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirements under Section 4.2 Stockmanship Skills Related to Animal Health and Welfare

All producers and stockpeople must understand the reporting requirement for reportable diseases and immediately consult the flock veterinarian when suspected cases occur.

Swellings

Unusual swellings or lumps need to be investigated before transport. The cause may be injury or infection – the conditions below are some but not all potential conditions. See also Water Belly (page 28).

ABSCESS

An abscess is a collection of pus formed from tissues that have been broken down by infection. Abscesses can occur on the skin, within muscle tissue or joints, or within the body involving organs.

Checkpoints: Compromised

- Single, minor abscess and the animal is otherwise in good condition.

Management Options:

- Treat or transport as soon as the abscess is visible.
- If the animal is transported, transport with special provisions directly to the nearest available place to receive care, treatment, be humanely slaughtered or euthanized (not to an auction or assembly yard).

Checkpoints: Unfit

- Multiple abscesses or single, large abscess with potential systemic effects.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – euthanize or treat with veterinary consultation.



HERNIA

A hernia involves the protrusion of an organ or part of an organ. The protruding organs or tissues form an abnormal bulge under the skin.

Checkpoints:

- Impeded movement.
- Hind leg touches hernia when walking.
- Painful on palpation.
- Touches the ground.
- Open wound.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – euthanize.



ORCHITIS (RAMS ONLY)

Checkpoints:

- Infection of testicle.
- Swollen, painful testes.
- Ram may appear lame on hind leg of affected side.

Management Options:

- Consult veterinarian, treat immediately.
- Transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard) if stable and lameness class 1 or 2.
- See page 35 for lameness classes.



SWOLLEN JOINTS (POSSIBLE ARTHRITIS)

Checkpoints:

- Multiple joints affected and/or the animal is in poor condition overall or is reluctant to stand.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – euthanize.



Other Conditions

TOO THIN (BODY CONDITION SCORE OF LESS THAN 2 OUT OF 5)

Checkpoints:

- Body condition scoring (BCS) is a tool for determining if an animal is too thin (BCS of less than 2 out of 5), too fat (BCS greater than 4 out of 5), or in ideal condition. Monitor body condition of each animal – identify animals that are losing condition early so they can be culled early or treated promptly.
- Animals that are too thin may also be weak or show other signs of illness.

Management Options:

- BCS 2 – Thin, little fat cover.
- Transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- BCS 1 – Emaciated, no fat cover, boney processes can be easily felt.
- Do not transport – euthanize.



Regulations

ALBERTA ANIMAL PROTECTION ACT

2.1 A person who owns or is in charge of an animal (a) must ensure that the animal has adequate food and water.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirement under Section 3.1 Nutrition and Feed Management

Monitor animal performance, behaviour, body condition score and health on an ongoing basis and adjust the feeding program accordingly if the average body condition score of the flock falls below the target for the stage of production seek the help of a nutritionist or veterinarian if required.

Take corrective action when the body condition score for individual sheep is less than 2 out of 5 for meat breeds and 1.5 out of 5 for dairy/prolific breeds of sheep.

Too Young

Newly born or very young lambs need special care whenever transported.

Checkpoints:

- Look for newly born or very young lambs.
- Umbilical cord not healed.

Management Options:

- Transport with special provisions short-haul (under 4 hours).
- Lambs unaccompanied by their dam must not be transported until the navel is healed and they reach seven days of age (see below).
- Lambs under eight days of age cannot be sold through a sale or collection yard (see below).
- Must be segregated from larger animals (except if with their dam – see below).



Regulations

HEALTH OF ANIMALS REGULATIONS

141 (1) Subject to this section, no person shall load on any railway car, motor vehicle, aircraft or vessel and no carrier shall transport animals of different species or of substantially different weight or age unless those animals are segregated.

141 (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a female animal and its suckling offspring.

ALBERTA ANIMAL PROTECTION REGULATION (203/2005)

7(1) – The following may not be present at a livestock market: (c) any other species of weaned livestock that is less than 8 days old.

15 – A person transporting livestock must segregate the livestock during transport as follows: (f) livestock of the same species but of substantially different weight or age are segregated from one another.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirement under Section 6.1.1 Fitness for Transport

Neonatal lambs unaccompanied by their dam must not be transported off farm until their navel is healed and they reach seven days of age.

PNEUMONIA AND/OR LABOURED BREATHING

Check Points: Compromised

- Respiratory distress without fever, weakness or dehydration.

Management Options:

- Transport with special provisions direct to local slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).

Checkpoints: Unfit

- Unresponsive to treatment (fever, weakness, difficulty breathing).

Management Options

- Do not transport – euthanize or treat.



PROLAPSE

A prolapse is the protrusion of the rectum, vagina or uterus to the outside of the body from its normal position usually due to inadequate strength of the surrounding supportive tissue.

Checkpoints: prolapsed vagina or rectum

- At onset, red coloured mucosa of the vagina or rectum protrudes.
- May remain prolapsed or return to normal position.

Management Options

- If recent (without necrosis or infection) – transport as soon as possible with special provisions direct to slaughter (not to a sale or collection yard).
- If heavily pregnant, treat to maintain in flock long enough to lamb.
- If chronic or severe euthanize.

Checkpoints: prolapsed uterus

- Prolapse begins with the appearance of red lining of the uterus and rapidly increases in size.
- Prolapse of the uterus occurs immediately after or within several hours of lambing.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – treat immediately or euthanize.

Code of Practice

**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE
AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)**

Requirements under Section 5.1.1

Pregnancy, Lambing and Neonatal Care

All stockpeople who will be involved with caring for sheep affected by vaginal or uterine prolapse must be competent, or be under the direct supervision of an experienced stockperson who is competent with managing these conditions.



WATER BELLY (URINARY CALCULI)

Checkpoints:

- Restlessness and anxiety, tail twitching when urinating.
- Abdominal pain, kicking up, urine dripping (with or without blood), distension and rupture of the urethra.
- Depressed appetite, fluid build-up under belly.

Management Options:

- Do not load or transport – euthanize or treat with veterinary consultation.



WEAK, UNSTABLE OR ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR

Checkpoints:

- Any condition that causes abnormal behaviour, (e.g. disorientation, staggering, increased aggression, wool pulling, or weakness) needs to be investigated.
- Age and production stage can be an indication of cause.

Possible causes include:

- neurological diseases (e.g. scrapie, rabies).
- metabolic/nutritional disorders (e.g. hypocalcaemia [milk fever], pregnancy toxemia [ketosis], polio, listeriosis, copper toxicity).
- blindness.

Management Options:

- Do not transport – delay until cause is determined.
- Contact a veterinarian.
- If a reportable disease is suspected, contact CFIA.
- If treatment is not an option, euthanize on farm, after clearance from a veterinarian.



Section 4 – Euthanasia

Acceptable Methods

Euthanasia refers to a humane and painless death. The method used must render the animal immediately insensible and the animal must not regain sensibility prior to death.

See page 30 of this handbook for acceptable methods as outlined in the sheep *Code of Practice* (2013).

When choosing a method of euthanasia also consider the following:

- human safety
- ability to easily restrain the sheep
- appropriateness for the type of sheep (e.g. animal age, weight or horns)
- degree of difficulty of the procedure
- procedural costs
- emotional effects on the operators or observers
- disposal options.

Anatomical Landmarks for Euthanasia

In horned sheep and rams the top of the head may not be the ideal location because of the thickness of the skull in this region. Instead, an alternate position and orientation for penetrating captive bolt or gunshot in horned animals is on a line from the poll and aimed downward toward the back of the throat. An alternative position for placement of the penetrating captive bolt or firearm in horned animals is the front of the skull directing the bolt or bullet toward the spinal cord.

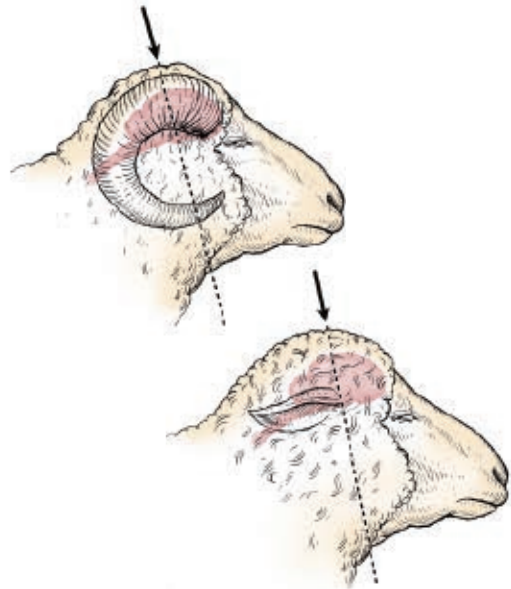


Image source: J.K. Shearer and A. Ramirez, College of Veterinary Medicine, Iowa State University www.vetmed.iastate.edu/HumaneEuthanasia. Reprinted with permission.

Code of Practice

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF SHEEP (2013)

Requirements under Section 7.1

Criteria for Euthanasia (Decision Making)

- Sheep must be euthanized without delay if experiencing pain or distress and does not have a reasonable expectation of improvement and or appropriate veterinary diagnosis and treatment is not feasible.
- All farms with employees must have a written euthanasia action plan for each phase of production that indicates the criteria for deciding when to euthanize an animal and the appropriate method(s).

Requirements under Section 7.2

Methods of Euthanasia

- An acceptable method for euthanizing sheep must be used.
- The method of euthanasia must be quick, cause minimal stress, pain and result

in rapid loss of consciousness followed by death without the animal regaining consciousness.

- Every farm must have the ability to euthanize animals (i.e. readily available tools or ready access to someone who does).
- All individuals performing euthanasia must have the required skills, knowledge, abilities, access to appropriate tools and be competent to perform the procedure.
- All stockpeople must be trained on the Euthanasia Action Plan and associated euthanasia methods.
- All equipment used for euthanasia, such as firearms or captive bolt devices must be maintained according to manufacturer's instructions to ensure proper function.

- Unnecessary handling and movement of sheep prior to euthanasia must be avoided. Animals must not be dragged, prodded, forced to move on broken limbs, or made to move when pain and suffering will occur.

Requirements under Section 7.3

Confirmation of Death

- If there are any indications of returning consciousness, the euthanasia procedure or an alternate one must be repeated immediately.
- Monitor the animal until death is confirmed by lack of respiration, lack of heartbeat and dilated pupils.
- Death must be confirmed before moving, leaving, or disposal of the animal.
- All carcasses should be disposed of according to all federal/provincial/territorial and municipal regulations.

Method of Euthanasia	Suitable for:	Procedure and Equipment
Firearm	All animals	Minimum .22 caliber firearm using "long-rifle" hollow-nosed ammunition and .22 magnum for horned animals or shotgun
Penetrating captive bolt* followed by a secondary method	All animals	Restrain if necessary Use appropriate cartridge, charge and bolt for the animal Accurate marksmanship to ensure loss of consciousness, confirm insensibility and follow with immediate bleeding out or pithing to ensure death
Non-penetrating captive bolt gun (Controlled blunt force trauma)	Lambs under 15 kg (33 lbs)	Confirm insensibility then follow with immediate bleeding out to ensure death
Barbiturate overdose	All animals	Must be administered under direction of veterinarian Restraint if needed Carcass is toxic; safe disposal is required
Blunt force trauma followed by bleeding out	Neonatal lambs up to 5 days and under 9 kg (20 lbs) only	Strong blow accurately placed on top or back of head Palpate or visually confirm the skull is crushed Confirm insensibility then follow with immediate bleeding out to ensure death

*Penetrating captive bolt guns specifically designed for euthanasia are available and should be used according to manufacturer's instructions.

Adapted from the sheep Code of Practice. Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (©2013) have been used with permission from the Canadian Sheep Federation and the National Farm Animal Care Council. www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep. For more information on euthanasia, consult the sheep *Code of Practice*.

Section 5 – Emergency Slaughter: What are the Options in Alberta?

Animals that become acutely unfit for transport, for example, due to a broken leg, may be salvageable by means of on-farm slaughter. There are currently two available options to ensure the humane treatment of animals and alignment with the provincial *Meat Inspection Act*:

Inspected Meat

The *Meat Inspection Act* empowers the Director to appoint veterinarians or other persons as Inspectors. The appointed individual is responsible for performing an ante-mortem (AM) inspection at the farm or feedlot. Once the animal has had an AM inspection performed, an emergency slaughter (humane stunning and bleeding) can be performed. The carcass must then be transported, in a manner that protects it from contamination or spoilage, to a Provincially Licensed Abattoir for evisceration and further processing. The carcass must be delivered to the abattoir within 2 hours of slaughter and receive a post-mortem (PM) inspection. The PM inspection can be done by either the appointed Inspector or by a Meat Inspection Branch Inspector. Once approved, the product is stamped as inspected and is then legal to sell. Note that the appropriate forms must be completed by the appointed Inspector on farm or feedlot and these forms will need to accompany the carcass to the licensed facility. Professional fees to engage an appointed Inspector are at the discretion of the provider.

Uninspected Meat

For uninspected meat, which cannot be sold and is for consumption by the animal owner and their household only, the animal can be slaughtered by a licensed mobile butcher or the owner at the farm or feedlot. The carcass can then be transported to a facility to be processed. It must arrive clean and free from contamination. The processor is required to keep the carcass sepa-

rate from any inspected products and mark it as “UNINSPECTED NOT FOR SALE”

For more information about emergency on-farm slaughter, including a list of appointed Inspectors, abattoirs, and mobile butchers in your area, contact the following regional meat inspection offices:

Airdrie 403-948-8514
Edmonton/Grande Prairie 780-427-7011
Vermilion 780-853 8113
Lethbridge 403-382-4261

or toll free by first dialing 310-0000.

Section 6 – Disposal Options

The owner of a dead animal must dispose of the animal in accordance with Alberta’s *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation* (132/2014) (empowered by the Animal Health Act).

According to section 3 of the regulation, the owner of a dead animal must dispose of the animal within 7 days unless the owner stores the dead animal:

- outside during the winter months when the temperature is low enough to keep the dead animal completely frozen,
- in a freezer unit, or
- in accordance with the direction of the chief provincial veterinarian, an inspector appointed under section 6(2) of the Act or a veterinary inspector appointed under the Health of Animals Act (Canada).

The owner of an animal that is euthanized with drugs and other chemical substances must take steps to prevent scavengers from gaining access to the animal from the time the substances are used until final disposal.

On farm disposal methods, including the use of burial, burning, natural disposal, and composting, can only be used if the owner had custody or care and control of the animal immediately before the animal’s death, and only on land

owned by the animal owner. Disposal options are highlighted below. Please refer to the *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation* (132/2014) for complete information. All of Alberta's legislation, including this Regulation, can be accessed through Alberta Queen's Printer at qp.alberta.ca.

Natural Disposal

Disposing of a dead animal to allow for scavenging. There are several conditions that must be met—see section 14 of the *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation* (132/2014) for details. Carcasses that have been euthanized with drugs (permitted use by a licensed veterinarian ONLY) cannot be disposed of in this manner as it poses a significant poisoning risk to scavengers (coyotes, birds), pets and drinking water.

Burial

On-farm burial is permitted provided several conditions are met – consult section 8 of the *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation* (132/2014).

Composting

Carcasses may be composted on-farm provided the conditions under the *Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation* (132/2014) are met. Carcasses may also be taken to a Class 1 compost facility. Some landfills accept carcasses for a fee (Class I or Class II landfills).

Burning

May occur if done in accordance with the applicable provisions in the *Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and in the regulations and codes of practice under the Act relating to burning in an open fire or an incinerator.

Rendering

A dead animal may be transported to a licensed rendering plant for disposal.

All dead animals must be disposed of in accordance with the Disposal of Dead Animals Regulation. Animals that are known or suspected to have died from a disease that is reportable under the Health of Animals Act (Canada) must also be disposed of in a manner directed by a veterinary inspector appointed under that Act.



Appendix A – Transport Decision Tree

SHOULD THIS ANIMAL BE LOADED?

Guidelines for Transporting Sheep

LOAD HEALTHY ANIMALS

Do Not Load
Do Not Transport



Do Not Transport to a Sale
or to a Collection Yard



Delay Transport, Provide Prompt Treatment and Reassess

- Exhaustion
- Lambing
- Dehydration
- Weakness/unstable
- Acute mastitis
- Ketosis
- Listeriosis (Listeria)
- Fever: > 103.3°F (39.6°C)
- Animals that have given birth within 48 hours



Euthanize

- Non-ambulatory (see box below)
- Lameness (Classes 3, 4, 5) or Crippled
- All fractures examples include: *jaw, spine, pelvis, limb*
- Significant injury (e.g. predation)
- Shock/Dying
- Arthritis in multiple joints
- Gangrenous Mastitis
- Extremely thin/Emaciation
- Pneumonia (*unresponsive e.g. fever, cyanosis, weakness, difficulty breathing*)
- Prolapsed uterus (*unless prompt treatment given*)
- Nervous disorders must be reported to CFIA
- Water belly (*urinary calculi*)
- Hernia (*see next page*)

Any condition where an animal can not be transported without suffering.

Transport with Special Provisions

Direct to Local Slaughter

Seek advice from your veterinarian and advise inspector at the destination plant.

- Abscess
- Blind
- Frost bite
- Lameness (Classes 1, 2)
- Left/right displaced abomasum (without weakness, toxicity)
- Penis injuries
- Pneumonia (without fever, weakness or dehydration)
- Bloat (no pain or weakness)
- Hardware with localized signs
- Intestinal accidents
- Recent minor injury
- Urethral blockage (acute)
- Smoke inhalation
- Recent prolapsed vagina or rectum without necrosis or infection

Animals with multiple conditions may not be fit to transport

Non-Ambulatory Animals – Unable to stand without assistance, or unable to move without being dragged or carried (downers). Do not load or transport.

Lame animals:

- Animals must not be loaded if at risk of going down in transit.
- Animals that can't bear weight on all four legs are in pain and are at risk of going down during transit. These animals are often euthanized at sales and plants.
- Do not transport any sheep where transport may cause suffering when being moved or transported such as significant foot rot, or excessively long feet or showing signs of pain such as arched back, very slow moving, unwilling to stand for more than short periods, or standing on its front carpus (knees).

Heavily Lactating Animals: Animals in heavy lactation requiring milking every 12 hours, or they will become unfit for transport.

Special Provisions

The following three special provisions must be met when transporting a compromised animal:

- A compromised animal must be transported locally and directly to the nearest suitable place where it can receive care and attention, or be humanely slaughtered or euthanized.
- A compromised animal must be the last animal loaded and the first animal unloaded.
- A compromised animal must be segregated from all other animals, or it may be penned with one familiar companion animal.

Note: To prevent undue suffering, other special provisions, such as additional bedding, may be required, depending on the condition of the compromised animal. Always ask a veterinarian if you are unsure about the appropriate special provisions, when moving a compromised animal.

Guidelines for Dealing with Compromised Sheep

DO

- Segregate animals of different species, or substantially different weights and ages, or if incompatible by nature.
- Provide proper ventilation, drainage and absorption of urine.
- Have sufficient headroom for animals to stand in a natural position.
- Spread sand in the vehicle or have vehicle fitted with safe footholds, in addition to appropriate bedding.
- Ensure that animals unloaded for feed, water and rest remain at least five hours and longer if five hours is not enough, for all animals to receive food and water.
- Ensure that animals segregated in trucks receive extra protection from cold and wind chill; supply ample bedding.
- Euthanize animals promptly when you identify conditions outlined in the “Should this Animal be Loaded?” chart.

DO NOT

- Transport a sick or injured animal where undue suffering may result.
- Transport when the animal is liable to give birth during the journey, unless under the advice of a veterinarian for medical care.
- Continue to transport an animal that is injured, becomes ill, or is otherwise unfit to travel beyond the nearest place it can be treated.
- Use electric prods or goads on sheep.
- Load or unload animals in a way that would cause injury or undue suffering.
- Crowd animals to such an extent as to cause injury or undue suffering.
- Transport livestock in trailers unless they are suited for safe handling of that species or class of livestock.

Lameness Classes

These categories can be used to determine the status of an animal’s mobility, from normal to non-ambulatory.

TRANSPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Class 1

Visibly lame but can keep up with the group: no evidence of pain.

Class 2

Unable to keep up; some difficulty climbing ramps. Load in rear compartment.

*DO NOT LOAD OR TRANSPORT**

Class 3

Requires assistance to rise, but can walk freely.

Class 4

Requires assistance to rise; reluctant to walk; halted movement.

Class 5

Unable to rise or remain standing.

** Any animal, including Lameness Classes 3, 4, or 5 may only be transported for veterinary treatment, on the advice of a veterinarian.*

Hernias:

Do not transport an animal that has a hernia that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- impedes movement (includes conditions in which the hind legs of the animal touches the hernia when the animal is walking).
- is painful on palpation.
- touches the ground when the animal is standing in its natural position, and/or includes an open skin wound, ulceration, or obvious infection.

Excerpts from the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep (©2013) have been used with permission from the Canadian Sheep Federation and the National Farm Animal Care Council. www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/sheep



Alberta Farm Animal Care's Emergency Livestock Handling Equipment Trailer Program

Alberta is a major livestock-producing province with high populations of animals. While most people involved with livestock are adequately equipped to handle animals, incidents can arise where proper livestock handling equipment is not readily available. The Emergency Livestock Handling Equipment Trailer program, maintained through Alberta Farm Animal Care, helps ensure emergency livestock handling equipment is available, as needed in situations including:

- A large welfare seizure,
- Capturing stray animals,
- Natural disaster (fire, flood)
- Motor vehicle breakdown or incidents during transport, and
- Other incidents where animals must be safely contained, and appropriate handling equipment is not available.

Incidents involving livestock can pose a grave risk to both animal and human safety. Proper equipment and training can mitigate much of the danger to people and the suffering of animals.

In November 2012, through this project, AFAC launched a fleet of 5 state-of-the-art livestock handling equipment trailers. These trailers are available for use in any number of situations where loose animals must be contained for the safety and welfare of both the animals and people involved. For example: fire, flood, barn roof collapse, animal welfare seizure, and traffic incidents. Another 11 trailers have joined the first 5 for a total of 16 across the province.

Transport accidents and other situations involving livestock in distress are never good to see – but they do happen, and it's essential to have the resources and knowledge to address them. These resources not only minimize stress for the animals but they improve the safety for everyone involved, including people. Having the correct tools and guidelines for the job takes a tremendous stress load off of the first responders. They, in turn, have an added confidence to handle these situations.

If you are in need of one of the trailers, please call 9-1-1 and request one. The dispatchers should be able to connect you to the closest location.





Contacts and Resources

Questions on the care of compromised or unfit animals: contact your local veterinarian

All of Alberta's legislation can be accessed through Alberta Queen's Printer at www.qp.alberta.ca .	Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) North Region 780-395-6700 South Region 587-230-2468 www.inspection.gc.ca
The Health of Animals Regulations (Canada) are available from: laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.,_c._296/	
Report suspected animal neglect and abuse: Alberta SPCA 800-455-9003	
Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian: 780-427-3448	

Additional information and resources

Livestock Care ALERT Line – Livestock help line and resource team to report livestock care concerns	800-506-2273	
Alberta Lamb Producers	403-948-8533	ablamb.ca
Alberta Farm Animal Care Association	403-652-5111	afac.ab.ca
Alberta Veterinary Medical Association	780-489-5007	abvma.ca
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	agriculture.alberta.ca 310-FARM (3276) (Toll free in AB) 403-742-7901 (Out of province)	
Livestock Identification Services	403-509-2088	lis-alberta.com
Alberta Processors (Rendering)	403-279-4441 (Calgary) 403-327-8460 (Lethbridge) 780-472-6750 (Edmonton)	wcr1.com
Ag Info Centre	310-3276 (Toll free in AB) 403-742-7901 (Out of province)	

The Alberta Farm Animal Care Association has developed Humane Handling Guidelines for most farmed animal species. Copies of the guidelines are available from:

Alberta Farm Animal Care Association
PO Box 5201
#5 112 Centre St SE
High River, Alberta T1V 1M4 CANADA
Tel: 403-652-5111 Fax: 403-663-3035
Email: info@afac.ab.ca
Web-friendly versions available at **afac.ab.ca**

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