



# Canadian Beef Code Update: What Producers Need to Know

Dr. Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein

AAFC Lethbridge, AB

June 9, 2026

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association 113<sup>th</sup> AGM,  
Swift Current , virtual presentation



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

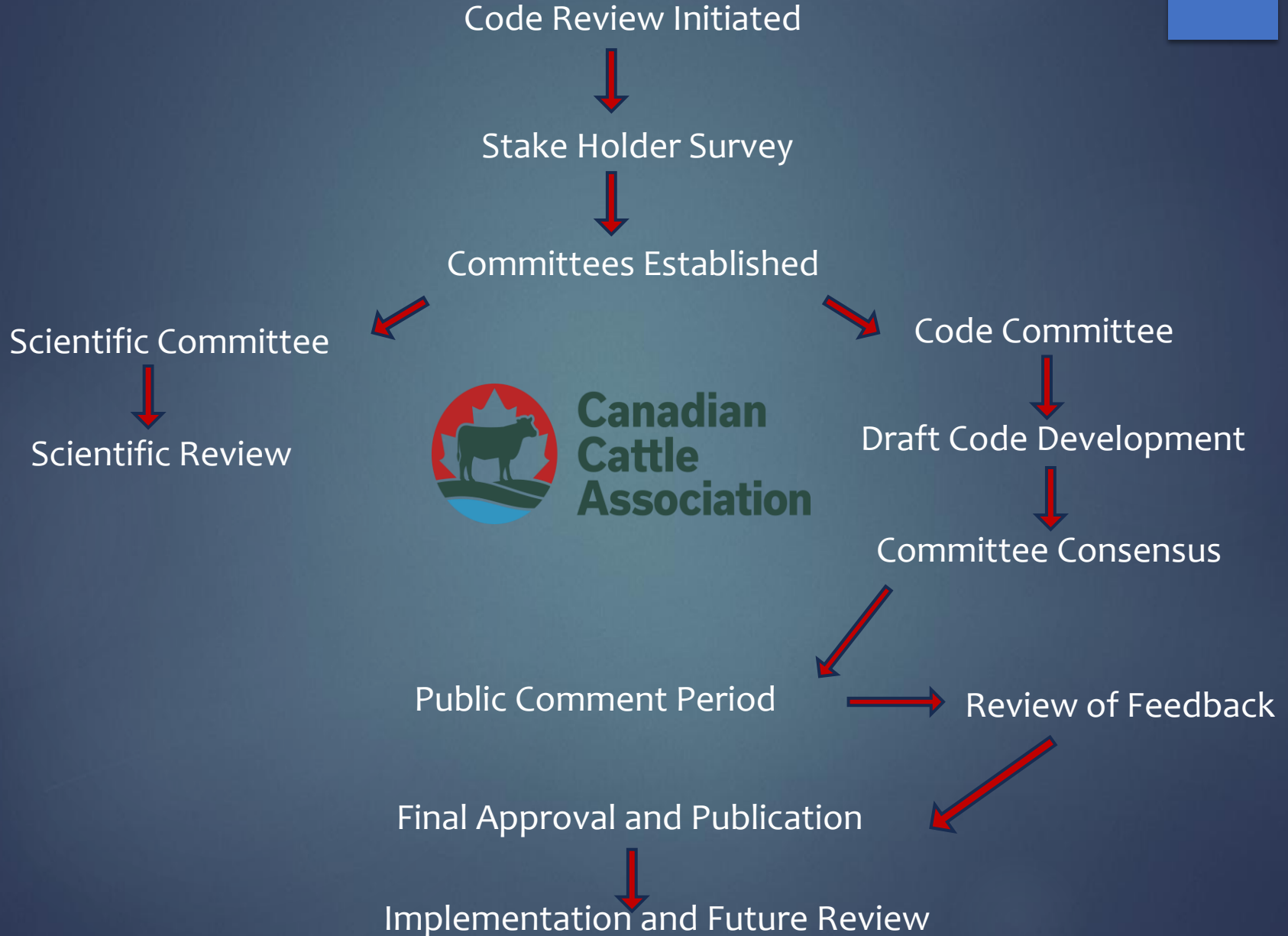
Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada

# Why Updates?

- Last Code of Practice update – 2013
- **General rule** – Reviewed every 5 yr; Updated every 10 yr
- **Why?**
  - Improve clarity
  - Address emerging animal-welfare concerns
  - Strengthen in areas under-represented
  - Align with current scientific knowledge
- **Changes**
  - Added information for clearer expectations/practical guidance
  - Updated requirements guided by:
    - Current science
    - Regulations
    - Industry practices
- **Outcome**
  - More detailed, prevention-focused, aligned with animal welfare standards



# NFACC Process



# Priority Welfare Issues

- Issues identified – survey of stakeholders and consensus of Scientific and Code committee



## 1. Pain control for painful procedures

- Assisted calving
- Disbudding and dehorning
- Castration
- Branding
- Spaying
- BRD and Lameness



## 2. Weaning

- Welfare impacts of weaning on both the cow and the calf
- Weaning procedures/practices
- Pre and post weaning management



# Priority Welfare Issues

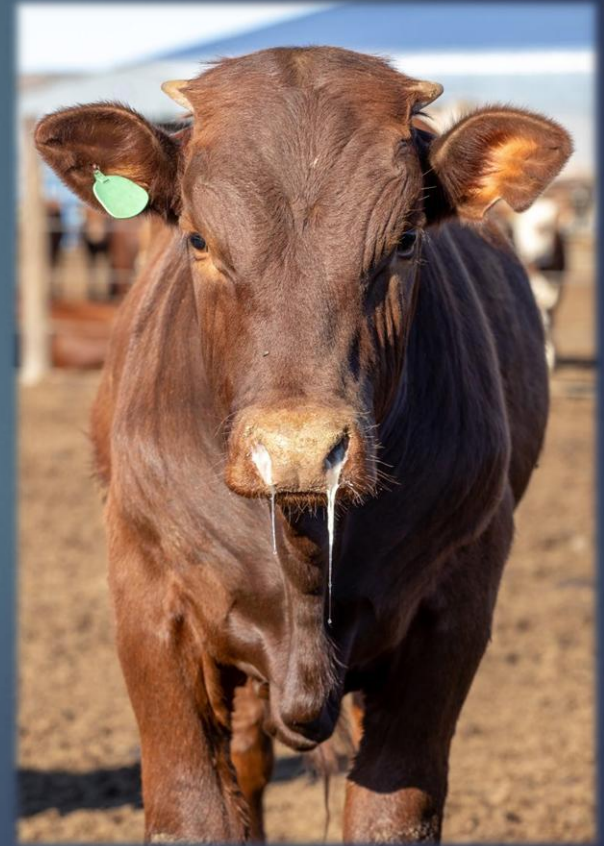


## 3. Health conditions at different stages of production

- Neonatal calf diarrhea
- BRD - cow-calf /feedlot production
- Lameness - cow-calf /feedlot production
- Nutritional diseases - acidosis, liver abscesses, laminitis

## 4. End-of-life management

- Current euthanasia methods and practices
- Decision-making especially for vulnerable cattle



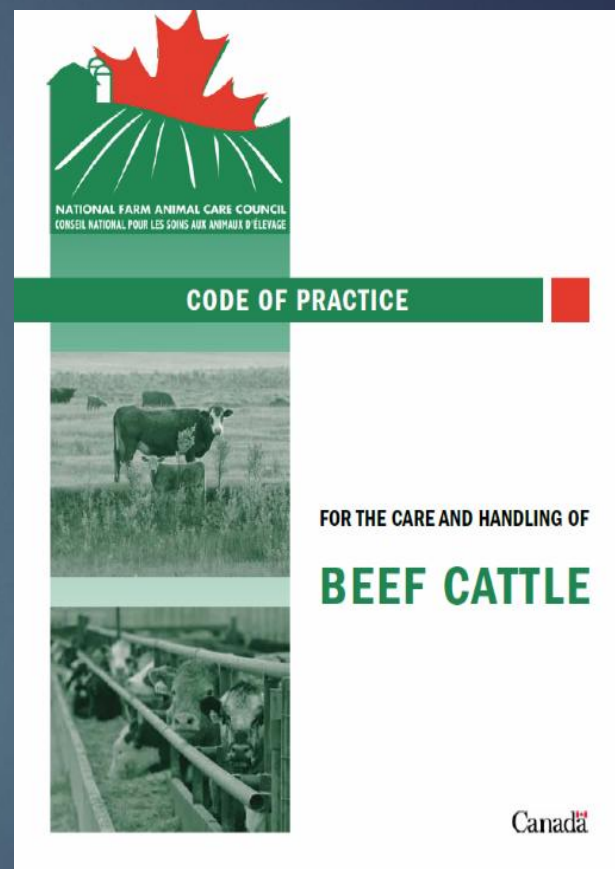
# Scientific Committee



- Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein (PhD) Chair – AAFC
- Claire Windeyer (DVM, DVSc) - U of C/ Acer
- Karin Orsel (DVM, PhD) - U of C
- Diego Moya (DVM, PhD) -U of S
- Derek Haley (PhD) - U of G
- Ed Pajor (PhD) - U of C
- Matt Bowman (CCA) – Code Development Committee Chair
- Acer Consulting (Steve Roche, PhD)-scientific writer

# Role of Scientific Committee

- Focus on research published since 2012
- New priority topics - all relevant research covered
- Summary of current scientific evidence for recommendations on best practice
  - Based on quality, properly conducted studies
  - What the body of research tells us
  - Where caution is needed and where gaps in research exist
- Focused on beef cattle studies with some use of dairy studies when suitable



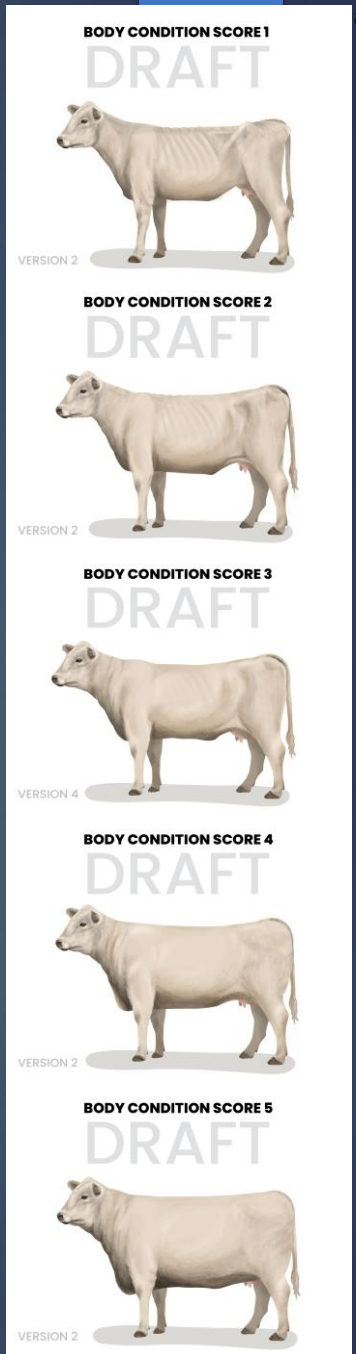
# Updates- Animal Environment

- Additional heat and cold stress content
- Increased monitoring of cattle for timely assistance when not coping in adverse weather
- **Mud and Moisture**
  - New section describing welfare impacts of mud and moisture
    - Reduced coat insulation and foot health problems
- **Facilities**
  - Safe, low-stress cattle movement
  - Considerations for housing severely sick or injured cattle



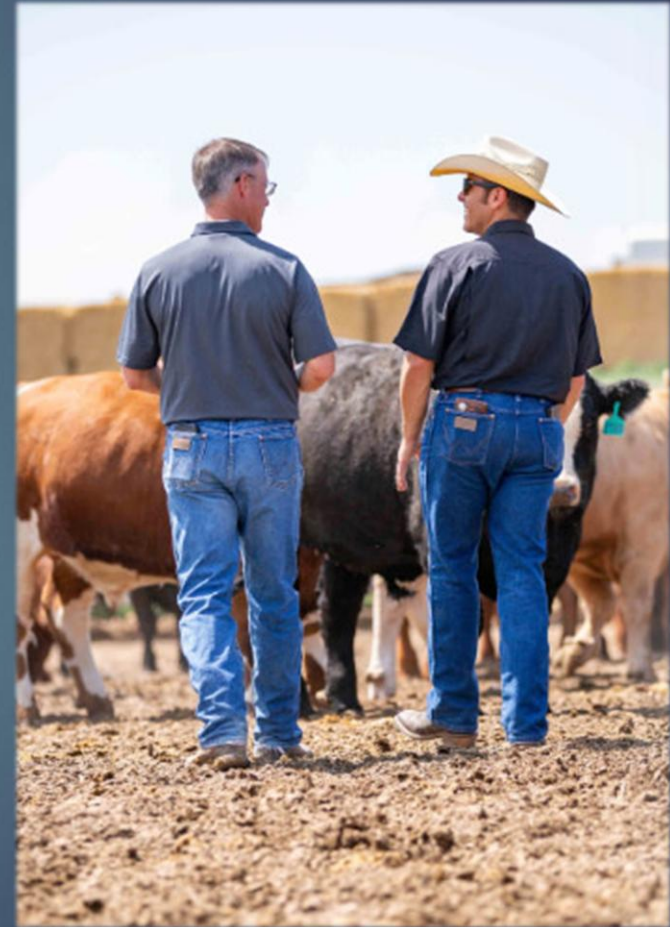
# Updates: Feed and Water

- **Nutrition and Feed Risks**
  - Stronger guidance on
    - Feed and water testing
    - Toxic feeds
    - Feed bunk management
    - Use of nutritionists
- **Body Condition**
  - Corrective action for cattle with BCS 2/5 or lower
  - Action to prevent BCS decline when cattle reach 2.5/5
- **Snow as Water**
  - Greater monitoring cattle when using snow as a water source
  - Additional detail added to requirements for when acceptable to use snow as a water source
  - i.e. clean loose snow, not lactating, newly weaned, BCS <2.5



# Updates: Animal Health

- Expanded
  - Detailed guidance around veterinary care/ herd health management
  - Disease reporting
  - Emergency preparedness – feed, water, transport
- Veterinary Care
  - Requirements and Recommended Practices emphasize importance of
    - Active Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR)
    - Develop and regularly update herd health program with vet
- Health Conditions
  - Content added on conditions relevant to the cow-calf sector
    - Reproductive disease
    - Neurologic disease
    - Pink eye



# Updates: Animal Husbandry

## ■ Low-Stress Handling

- Information increased on low-stress handling and behavioural signs of stress
- Expectations for unacceptable prod use were rewritten and clarified
- *“Electric prods must not be used except to assist movement of cattle when other humane alternatives have failed”*



## ■ Non-Ambulatory Cattle (new section)

- Requirements for prompt care
- Safe handling
- Appropriate lifting tools
- Access to feed and water

# Updates: Animal Husbandry

## ■ Reproduction and Calving

- Expanded content - calving decision tree and updated guidance
  - reducing best window for receiving colostrum from 6 to 4 hours after birth

## ■ Weaning

- Expanded and sub-divided into pre-weaning, weaning, and post-weaning
- New Recommended Practices
- New Requirement for increased monitoring after weaning



# Updates: Animal Husbandry

## ■ Pain Control for Painful Procedures

- Pain mitigation expectations enhanced
- Requirements for pain control
  - Assisted difficult calvings
  - Spaying (carried out by vet using pain control)
  - Branding calves under 6 months (**all** cattle starting Jan 1, 2032)
  - Disbudding/dehorning and castration all cattle (phased in as of Jan 1, 2016 in the 2013 Code)
- All in consultation with a veterinarian
- New sections – Spaying, Dystocia, BRD, Lameness



# Updates: Preparation for Transport

- National transport regulations (Health of Animals Regulations) - expanded since 2013
  - Heavily influenced the updates to this section
- **Regulatory compliance**
  - New Requirements made to align with updated transport regulations
  - Some Requirements removed to avoid duplication with regulations
  - Requirements and Recommendations focus on assessing fitness for transport and enhanced guidance around prep for transport
- **Appendices**
  - Transportation appendices updated to include current CFIA guidance



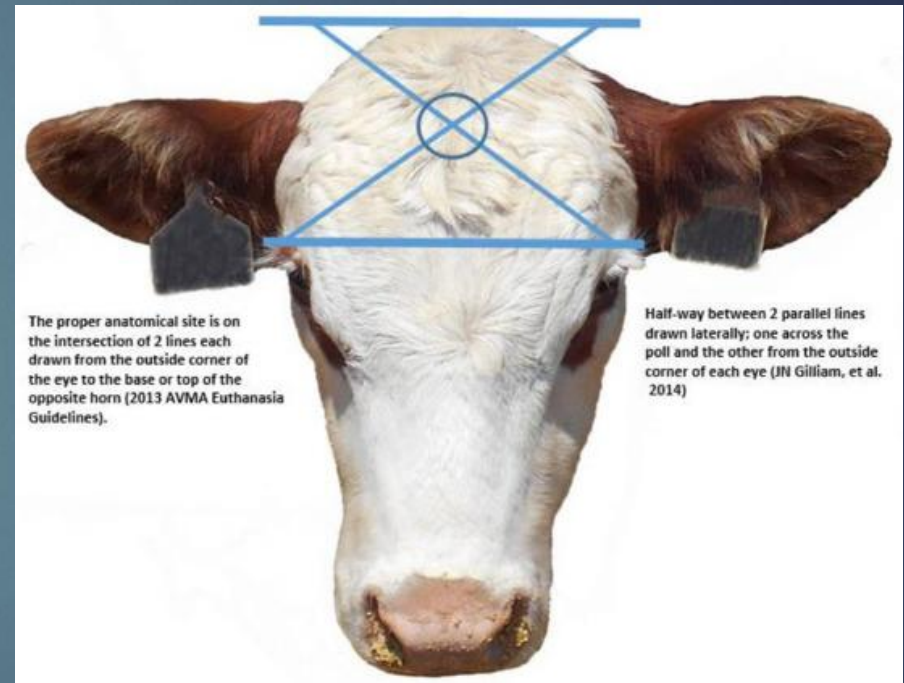
# Updates: Euthanasia

## ■ Euthanasia methods

- Acceptable methods for euthanasia in table form- user-friendly
- More specific info; appropriate firearms and ammunition for different classes of cattle
- Updated images; appropriate landmarks for firearm euthanasia

## ■ Producer resources

- Information on where to find farmer-specific mental health references added



# Thank you and Questions

