



# ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP | CANADA COUNTRY PROFILE

## KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



POPULATION



12,035,000



826,400



12,770,461



2,900,000

Cattle slaughtered in federally inspected facilities in 2018



US\$1bn

Live bovine export market



12th

Biggest cattle inventory worldwide

BEEF CONSUMPTION



19kg  
kgs/capita  
(42 lbs/capita)



The objective of the country profiles is to provide an overview of the animal welfare landscape and the differences between regions. The information provided is general in nature and a summary of facts, it does not represent the opinion of Leather Working Group. The country profiles are living documents, that are reviewed and updated from time to time. While Leather Working Group has taken due care to ensure the information is accurate as of the date of publication, the information is provided on an "as is" basis and we make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy. Please note that examples of high-quality and low-quality animal welfare can be identified in every region. Leather Working Group is not liable to any person for any loss suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on the information.

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## SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

### **Transport**

- There is significant legislation governing the transportation of animals both domestically and internationally.
- The vast majority of Canadian animal exports go to the USA, where they will continue to be protected by strict legislation.
- Animals must be deemed fit before they can travel. Once travelling there are regulations on vehicles, the duration of travel, loading and unloading, and environmental protection.

### **Traceability**

- All cattle are given a code to track their movement between locations and premises, many of which will also have a code. In some states, it is compulsory for all facilities to have a code.
- Pigs are ear tagged or tattooed with identifying information. Any changes to location must be documented. Many facilities have an identification code.
- All sheep are given an ear tag at their original farm. It is illegal to buy or sell a sheep without a tag. **Slaughter**
- All animals must be rendered unconscious before slaughter. Each province has additional laws regarding acceptable methods of slaughter.
- There are fewer than ten facilities that conduct halal slaughter that are recognised by a third party. It is likely that many more offer halal slaughter but have not yet been recognised by this organisation.

### **Legislation**

- There is some federal regulation regarding animal welfare, but the majority of legislation is determined at the provincial level.
- The argued cultural significance of hunting has made issues of animal welfare a contentious subject politically.

### **Governance**

- There is very little evidence of corruption in Canada, suggesting that there is effective governance.
- Violations of animal welfare legislation are taken very seriously. A significant number of investigations are undertaken annually, and individuals found to be breaking the law are punished appropriately.

### **NGO Activity**

- Much of the attention NGOs give to Canada focus on the fur industry, who argue the practice is cruel and unnecessary.
- Seal hunting is a longstanding tradition in Canada that faces scrutiny from NGOs. Many countries refuse to import seal products citing animal welfare concerns.

## FARMING

There are more than 200,000 farms in Canada which collectively cover 6% of its total land surface<sup>12,3</sup>. 74,000 farms reared cattle in 2017<sup>4</sup>, of which 59,000 derived more than 50% of their income from the cattle industry<sup>2,4</sup>. The total number of Canadian farms has fallen in recent years, however those which are currently in operation have seen their average size increase to 800 acres<sup>5</sup>. Canada has the 12th largest cattle inventory worldwide<sup>6</sup>, and is a major exporter of pork, behind the USA and the EU<sup>5</sup>.

As a whole, the agricultural and agri-food industries employ 2.3 million Canadians and the country is the 5th largest agricultural exporter in the world<sup>6</sup>. It is a significant industry to the Canadian economy with total agricultural exports contributing in excess of US\$69 billion in 2015<sup>5</sup>. The industry grew 11% between 2012 and 2016; a rate higher than that of the Canadian economy in its entirety<sup>7</sup>. This growth was partly caused by an increase in productivity and output aided by the employment of more modern farming technology<sup>7</sup>.

Canada exported US\$11.6 billion and imported US\$5 billion of animal-based products in 2016<sup>8</sup>. Table 1 provides a summary of Canada's animal-based exports. 360,000 tonnes of beef were exported in 2016, representing 39% of total slaughter<sup>5</sup>. These products were exported to 56 countries<sup>5</sup>, however as with Canadian exports in their entirety, the USA is the key trading partner (Table 1)<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 1. Summary of the three most exported animal-based products and the three most significant destinations.**

PRODUCT	COUNTRY (contribution)
Porcine meat (US\$ 2.52bn)	1. USA (37%)
	2. Japan (32%)
	3. China (13%)
Bovine meat (US\$ 1.22bn)	1. USA (91%)
	2. Mexico (5.8%)
	3. Japan (1.4%)
Live bovine (US\$ 1.09bn)	1. USA (99.7%)
	2. Mexico (0.18%)
	3. S. Korea (0.008%)

The close-knit trading relationship between Canada and the USA stems largely from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in which the two countries have eliminated all tariffs and quantitative restrictions with regards to, among other things, agricultural goods<sup>9</sup>. The agreement has also led to the two countries working closely in eradicating pests and diseases, conducting scientific research and enhancing conservation efforts<sup>9</sup>. Political developments since 2016 have seen the principles set out by NAFTA receive increased levels of scrutiny, and the possibility of an amended deal has been discussed<sup>10</sup>. A re-negotiated NAFTA may have implications for animal welfare practices, which some believe would be a reduction in accepted standards<sup>10</sup>.

Canada is composed of 10 provinces and territories and the extent to which livestock is farmed varies between locations. Alberta is the most significant cattle farming province. 41% of Canada's cattle inventory was located in Alberta in 2017<sup>4</sup> and it contained more beef cattle than every other province combined in 2016<sup>11</sup>. Neighbouring Saskatchewan is the second most significant cattle farming province, producing beef products totalling C\$1.7 billion in 2015<sup>4</sup>.

The majority of porcine production occurs in the provinces of Manitoba, Quebec, Ontario and Alberta<sup>11,13</sup>. Production facilities range from large, industrialised facilities to small holdings. Of those facilities rearing pigs, 99.7% of the inventory is held in 50% of facilities, and 0.3% on the remaining 50%<sup>11</sup> meaning that the majority of animals are farmed on larger, industrial facilities. It is common for industrial scale facilities to rear animals for the entirety of the production process due to losses in productivity associated with transport and relocation<sup>12</sup>.



To provide some context, Canada has a long history of hunting and trapping animals, and farming them, to make use of their fur. Two-thirds of Canadian fur originates from mink and fox farms<sup>12</sup>, whereas the process of hunting and trapping is typically associated with muskrat, beaver and marten<sup>12</sup>. There are an estimated 210 mink farms in Canada of which half are located in Nova Scotia<sup>13</sup>. Hunting and trapping are undertaken on a less commercial scale.

Canada has one of the world's most well-established equine farming industries. There are 5 registered slaughter facilities<sup>14</sup>, and the country contributed 16% of global output in 2016<sup>15</sup>. Of this, 40% was exported to Japan, 23% to France and 17% to Switzerland<sup>15</sup>.

Hot branding is an animal welfare risk in Canada. There is no data available detailing the number of animals that are hot branded, however the Alberta provincial government, where a significant proportion of Canadian cattle are located, provides detailed guidance on how the process should be undertaken<sup>14,15</sup>. Mulesing is not an accepted practice in Canada, and tail docking is only permissible where it has been recommended by a veterinarian<sup>16</sup>. However, the de-horning of cattle is acceptable in Canada, although the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) note that selective breeding has enabled there to be a reduction in the number of animals undergoing the procedure<sup>17</sup>. This represents an animal welfare risk.

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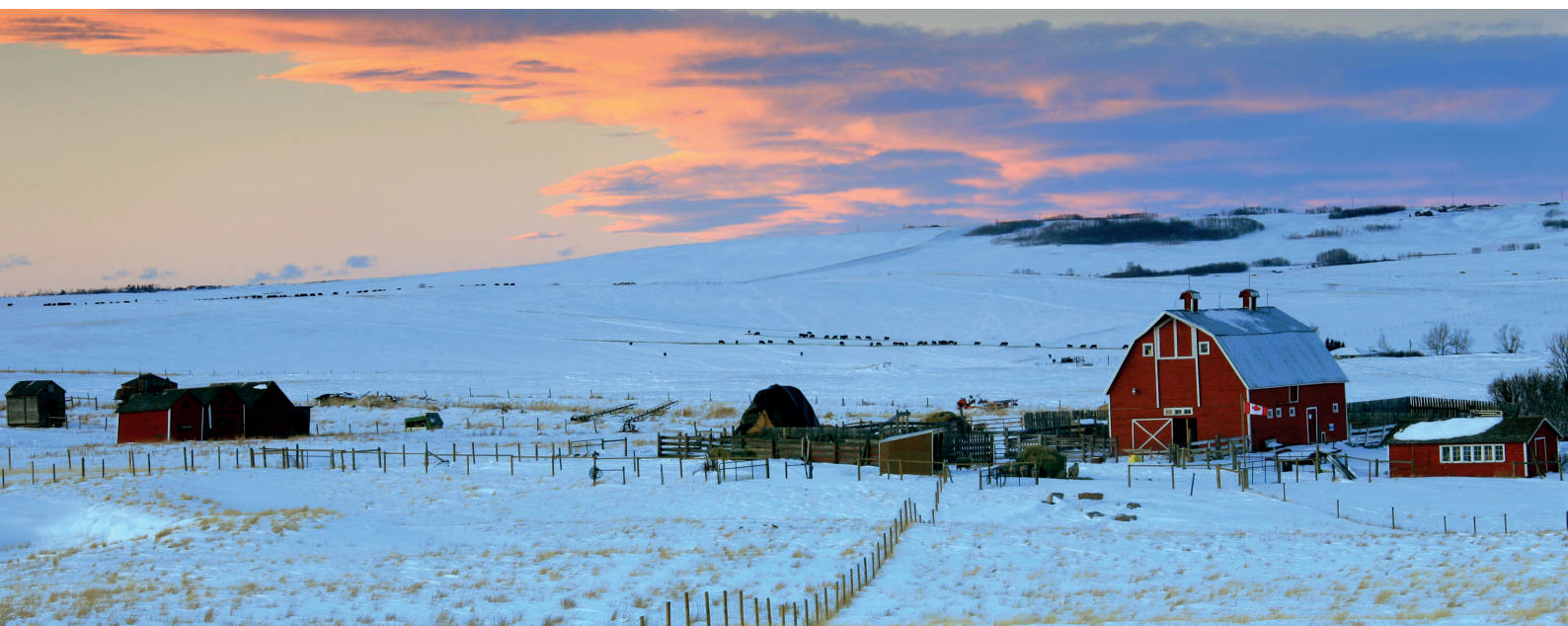
## TRANSPORT

International and domestic transportation is common for Canadian livestock. Approximately 660,000 live cattle were exported from Canada in 2018<sup>18</sup>, and the majority of domestically reared cattle are transported from facilities in which they are fed by pasture, to intensive feedlots once bodyweight has reached 200-300kg<sup>19</sup>. In 2016, Canada exported US\$1.09 billion of live bovine animals, equating to 14% of global output<sup>8</sup>. 99.7% of these exports were destined for the USA<sup>8</sup>.

Both domestic and international transport is governed by federal and provincial legislation. Canada is an expansive country meaning that limits have been set for the amount of time that animals can be transported without the provision of rest, food and water<sup>20</sup>. Ruminants cannot be transported in excess of 52 hours, and monogastric species cannot be transported for longer than 36 hours<sup>20</sup>.

Adherence with legislation is enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)<sup>21</sup> who have themselves set transport standards in the form of the Federal Health of Animals Regulations (FHAR). With its key purpose being to ensure the safe and humane transport of animals, the FHAR first provide guidance on how to decide whether an animal is fit for travel. Once this has been established, parameters related to the upkeep of vehicles and protection of animals from adverse environmental conditions are set<sup>22</sup>. It is suggested that sufficient bedding is provided, incompatible species are segregated and that measures are taken to ensure that animals are loaded and unloaded safely<sup>22</sup>.

Overall, the FHAR provides comprehensive guidance about how to mitigate many of the key animal welfare risks associated with the transport process.



## TRACEABILITY

A central traceability system is operated by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA)<sup>23</sup>. Established as a means of managing concerns related to animal health and food safety, the scheme operates by providing animals and premises with unique codes by which an animal's complete history can be established<sup>23</sup>. Any changes to location are recorded and stored centrally in a national database<sup>23</sup>.

It is not compulsory for all premises to be issued with a unique code, however every animal must be tagged, and a failure to do so can lead to fines and prosecution<sup>24</sup>. Certain states have made it compulsory for all facilities to participate, these are: Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta<sup>25</sup>.

PigTRACE was introduced in 2014 as a means of ensuring the traceability of porcine species<sup>26</sup>. Overseen by the Canadian Pork Council, PigTRACE requires facilities upon which pigs are held to be issued with a unique identification number, and animals to be provided with a tattoo or ear tag containing their individual identification code and herd mark<sup>26</sup>. Any change in location is reported directly to PigTRACE by the site operator<sup>26</sup>.

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) also came into effect in 2014<sup>27</sup>. A compulsory scheme, animals are fitted with a CSIP approved ear tag prior to leaving their location of origin<sup>27</sup>. Facility operators are required to keep records of every animal that enters a flock for breeding purposes and all animals aged 18 months or older that leave a herd, except for those sold to a federally or provincially approved slaughterhouse<sup>27</sup>. Only animals which have been issued with an approved ear tag can be purchased<sup>27</sup>.

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## HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

Canada exported US\$861 million of animal hides, skins and leather-based products in 2016<sup>8</sup>. Of this, more than US\$377 million was from raw or tanned furskin, more than US\$220 million was from the export of bovine and equine hides, and more than US\$130 million was from luggage (e.g. trunks and cases)<sup>8</sup>. Table 2 shows the key locations to which each of these different products were exported<sup>8</sup>.

PRODUCT AND RANKING	EXPORT PARTNER (share)
Furskins: 1st	China (38%)
Furskins: 2nd	USA (28%)
Furskins: 3rd	Cambodia (6%)
Equine and bovine hides: 1st	China (53%)
Equine and bovine hides: 2nd	USA (15%)
Equine and bovine hides: 3rd	South Korea (14%)
Trunks and cases: 1st	USA (58%)
Trunks and cases: 2nd	Japan (7.8%)
Trunks and cases: 3rd	Mexico (6.9%)

In 2013 Canada produced 54.1 million ft<sup>2</sup> of light bovine leather and 1.6 million ft<sup>2</sup> of light ovine and caprine leather<sup>40</sup>. The most recent figures published by the Canadian government suggest that there are 161 businesses operating in the tanning and finishing of leather, and 542 leather manufacturers (a significant proportion of which are small-scale, artisanal operations based on hunted raw material)<sup>41</sup>. Ontario contains the greatest number of tanneries and finishers, and manufacturers, followed by Quebec and British Columbia<sup>41</sup>. 21 tanneries and finishing facilities are located in Alberta<sup>41</sup>.

Canada's leather industry is not self-sufficient, and in 2016 US\$66.4 million of tanned equine and bovine hides were imported<sup>8</sup>. The three main sources of these products were Italy, USA and Brazil which collectively contributed 77% of total leather imports<sup>8</sup>. The fur industry also relies on imports: US\$328 million of raw furskins were imported in 2016, 55% of which was sourced from Poland and 44% from the USA<sup>8</sup>. Both of these are relevant to matters of animal welfare and indicate that animal-based materials that are exported from Canada may have been produced using raw materials from elsewhere.





## SLAUGHTERING

Slaughterhouses can be inspected at both the federal and provincial level<sup>28</sup>. For a product to be sold internationally, or in other provinces within Canada, it must be federally inspected. Provincially inspected facilities are only able to sell produce within the province by which it was inspected, and these sites are typically smaller than those which are federally inspected<sup>28</sup>. Over 2.9 million cattle were slaughtered in federally inspected facilities in 2018<sup>29</sup>, a figure which has shown annual growth since 2016<sup>29</sup>. In 2017 there were 24 federally inspected facilities, 12 of which were located in the states of Alberta and Ontario<sup>30</sup>.

The regulation of slaughter is largely dependent on provincial legislation<sup>31</sup>, however federal legislation such as the Meat Inspection Act (MIA) stipulates that an animal's exposure to pain must be minimised and that animals must be rendered unconscious prior to slaughter<sup>32</sup>. The MIA establishes three accepted methods of rendering an animal unconscious: head trauma by mechanical device; gas, and electric shock<sup>31</sup>. Every province has passed additional legislation regarding acceptable methods and conditions of slaughter<sup>32</sup>, however the extent to which they consider animal sentience and 'comfort' varies. For example, Alberta Regulation 42/2003 legislates for the undertaking of 'humane slaughter' in which animals are provided with immediate shelter, food, water and bedding upon arrival at an abattoir<sup>33</sup>. These provisions are not made in other states, such as Saskatchewan<sup>34</sup>.

In addition to federal and provincial law, there are also collaborative, multi-stakeholder bodies that publish guidance which covers a range of issues relevant to animal welfare, including slaughter. The NFACC have published Codes of Practice for a wide range of animals, including livestock such as cattle, pigs and sheep, in which recommendations are made for how each should be slaughtered<sup>35,36</sup>. Compliance with the measures stated in these documents is voluntary, however they are promoted by provincial and federal governments, and well as industry bodies. The NFACC also provide recommendations on best practices for animals farmed for fur such as mink. Specifically, carbon monoxide poisoning is identified as the most effective slaughter method, something which is reiterated by the Canada Mink Breeders Association<sup>37,38</sup>.

Animals slaughtered for the purpose of being consumed by a producer's family are exempt from most restrictions<sup>31</sup>, however the sale of meat produced in this way is not legally permissible<sup>31</sup>. Whether this also applies to the sale of these animals' hides remains unclear, however any quantities would likely be negligible.

As of November 2018, there were 9 processing facilities certified by the Halal Monitoring Authority (HMA) to undertake the slaughter of cattle in Canada<sup>39</sup>. While an exhaustive list of all facilities undertaking halal slaughter is unavailable, it is likely that there are a number of facilities in which the practice is performed but do not work with the HMA.



## LEGISLATION & REGULATION

Matters of animal welfare fall mostly under the jurisdiction of provincial governments<sup>42</sup>, however there are three pieces of federal law in which animal welfare is considered: the Health of Animals Act, Meat Inspection Act, and Criminal Code<sup>42</sup>. The Health of Animals Act focuses on the treatment of animals destined for human consumption and regulates the treatment of animals when they are on farms or in transit<sup>43,44</sup>. The Meat Inspection Act focuses on the welfare of animals once they have been delivered to slaughter facilities and the Criminal Code governs acts of cruelty deliberately carried out against an animal which are not recognised as standard industry practices<sup>43,44</sup>.

The reliance upon provincial legislation means that there are spatial inconsistencies in approaches to, and coverage of, animal welfare issues. States such as Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan have passed significant amounts of additional legislation, whereas those such as Quebec, North West Territories and Nunavut have no legislation explicitly tackling matters of animal welfare for livestock<sup>43</sup>. It is significant that Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan cover matters of animal welfare in greater depth given that much of Canada's livestock farming is undertaken in these provinces.

The passing of animal welfare legislation is a contentious issue in Canada due to the cultural significance of hunting<sup>45,46</sup>. Attempts to pass legislation that extend the restrictions placed on the slaughter of animals are inherently controversial to those sections of society that undertake hunting as a recreational activity and are reliant on industries in which animals are slaughtered for their livelihoods (e.g. fur)<sup>45,46</sup>.



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## GOVERNANCE

Violations of federal legislation are enforced by the police alongside other agencies such as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The penalties for violations include fines of up to C\$250,000 and prison sentences of up to 5 years<sup>43,44</sup>. The extent to which federal violations are investigated, and perpetrators prosecuted, remains unclear, however it has been noted that infringements of provincial legislation are more frequently enforced<sup>43</sup>.

The enforcement of animal welfare legislation differs between provinces. A range of different agencies administer provincial animal welfare legislation, however the Society for the Protection of Animals (SPCA) does so in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick<sup>43</sup>. Recent figures showing the number of prosecutions are difficult to source, however in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia more than 27,000 investigations were undertaken in 2011<sup>43</sup>. The volume of investigations indicates that animal welfare violations are taken seriously in Canada.

The power given to the SPCA is controversial, and in 2019 judges in the province of Ontario voted that the organisation's ability to enforce animal welfare legislation is unconstitutional because it is a non-government organisation<sup>47</sup>. As a result, the Ontario provincial government may choose to instil these powers to a government body. Whether such rulings will occur elsewhere in Canada remains to be seen<sup>47</sup>.

The Corruption Perceptions Index is used as a means of objectively comparing standards of national governance<sup>48</sup>. Canada is ranked as the 8th least corrupt country in the world meaning that it can be asserted with some confidence that the country is governed in an effective and diligent way<sup>48</sup>.



## NGO ACTIVITY

Animal welfare receives a significant amount of NGO attention in Canada driven largely by those who campaign against the fur industry, as well as activities such as the commercial hunting of seals<sup>49</sup>. There are those who vocally support and oppose both industries, alongside other controversial activities such as recreational hunting.

Opponents to the fur industry argue that the practice is cruel, needless and a hotspot for animal welfare violations<sup>49</sup>. Contrasting views are provided by supporters of the industry who argue that there are accepted codes of practice (e.g. NFACC) and pieces of provincial legislation that govern the industry<sup>49</sup>.

Commercial seal hunting has a long history in Canada, and while many parts of the animal have been utilised in the past, modern hunting is focused on fur<sup>50</sup>. A strong public opposition to seal hunting exists internationally, and this has led to over 35 countries, including the EU, banning imports of products related to seal<sup>50</sup>. Those products that originate from Inuit manufacturers are excluded from bans in a number of countries due to the community's longstanding involvement in the practice, and proponents of the industry highlight its importance to the economies of coastal regions<sup>50</sup>. The Canadian government requires that training be provided to every individual undertaking the slaughter of a seal, however animal rights activists argue that these regulations are overlooked by many<sup>50</sup>. Seal hunting is an animal welfare risk in Canada, however many of these risks, along with the industry's specific cultural and political pressures, are not applicable to those animals commonly raised for meat production and leather as a by-product. There are organisations that also oppose the farming of horse in Canada, mainly due to the animal being viewed as a companion species to many people in Canada and elsewhere<sup>51</sup>.

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## FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

Farm assurance schemes have been used in Canada for several decades and have traditionally been focused on improving the quality of produce<sup>52</sup>. The Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) is a project operated by federal, provincial and territorial authorities in which C\$3 billion is being invested into projects that support Canadian exports in becoming more competitive abroad<sup>53</sup>. A wide range of projects have received funding, however federal investment is focused on six specific areas, which could all conceivably provide grants to projects related to animal welfare<sup>53</sup>. As a means of example, the Canadian Pork Council received CAP funding to provide a programme in which producers anywhere in Canada can be certified if they meet criteria related to traceability, food safety or animal care<sup>54</sup>. The strand related to animal care sets requirements specifically related to how pigs are treated and is a reflection of the federal government supporting improvements in standards of welfare for farm animals.





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Web links used as part of the research for this document are included below; due to the dynamic nature of web resources, accessibility to resources may change.

Where web links have been viewed as part of the research for this document the date accessed is logged. Documents may have been accessed over a period of four to six weeks however most recent view date is provided.

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