



**ANIMAL
ALLIANCE**
OF CANADA

*Animal
Protection
Through
Education &
Advocacy*

May 6, 2009

Chair and Members
Standing Committee on Fire Protection
Canadian Codes Centre, Institute for Research in Construction
National Research Council Canada, Building M-23A
1200 Montreal Road
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R6



Dear Sirs and Mesdames:

Re: Farm Building Code of Canada – 1995 (NFBC)

Livestock operations in Canada are growing increasingly large, with ever larger numbers of animals and economic value.

Within the past several years there has been a rash of serious barn fires in Canada, causing massive loss of animal life, particularly in intensive livestock confinement operations (ILCOs). For example, more than 30,000 pigs died in Manitoba in 2008 alone – an eight-fold increase over 2007 (*Winnipeg Free Press*, January 2, 2009). In addition to lost animal lives, there are significant economic losses.

See Appendix I for a list of recent barn fires in Canada, including numbers of animal lives lost and economic loss

See Appendix II for economic data, 2004-2007: Millions of dollars lost in barn fires, Ontario.

The national standard for farm building construction (Farm Building Code of Canada – 1995) contains minimum requirements and does not adequately protect animal lives, as evidenced in Appendix I. The standard does not require either sprinklers or smoke alarms for buildings with not more than one person occupancy per 40 square metres. Changes to the Farm Building Code of Canada are needed to strengthen it.

There are thousands of commercial farm buildings in Canada, many of which house many thousands of animals. In many ILCOs, animals are confined in cages and crates. These animals can not be rescued when fire breaks out.

Fire prevention is key to minimizing the *potential* for fires in farm buildings. Practical measures to minimize risk include smoke alarms, sprinklers and fire-retardant paint, yet these measures are not currently mandated. In addition, fire-stopping measures in barn attics are needed to help prevent spread of a fire within a structure. Farm building owners and managers need to ensure wiring is up to code, not allow smoking, ensure heaters and electrical devices are inspected, and ensure hay storage is well ventilated and whenever possible heated in a different building. Schedule emergency fire drills and conduct annual inspections of safety equipment. Portable fire extinguishers approved for use in all climates should be mounted outside each exit door, with training for all employees in the equipment.

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Laurie Loveman, a 20+ year member of the fire service, and advocate for fire safety in barns (www.firesafetyinbarns.com), has been tracking barn fires in North America for several years. (Her information about barn fires in Canada is the basis for Appendix I, attached.) She describes the impossibility of saving animals – already compromised by breathing ammonia-laden air – so carbon monoxide, among other toxins produced by combustion, quickly kills them. With so many animals in farm buildings and too few employees to even attempt evacuation, the only means of saving lives is by sprinkler systems and doing away with large-scale ILCOs. Given that most intensive operations have automated watering systems, the basic infrastructure is already in place to allow for the construction of a sprinkler system, including existing barns.

From the fire fighter's perspective, the sounds and smells of burning animals take such an emotional toll that some fire fighters require grief counselling from the trauma of seeing, hearing and smelling the animals' injuries and deaths.

What is needed

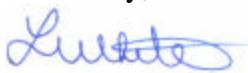
The NFBC is a guide to **minimum** requirements for farm building construction in Canada. Higher fire standards for farm buildings are needed to better protect the lives of farm animals in Canada, especially those in intensive confinement operations where thousands of animals are in close proximity to one another.

We request changes to the Farm Building Code of Canada – 1995 to include:

- 1) Changes to the building code** to require all new commercial farm buildings housing animals to include sprinklers, smoke and heat alarms and alarms to detect ventilation failures; use of non-toxic, non-carcinogenic fire retardants on wood surfaces; fire-stopping measures for farm building attics (if present), and mandatory inspections by the local fire chief.
- 2) Retrofitting of existing commercial farm buildings** which house animal populations to include sprinklers, smoke and heat alarms and alarms to detect ventilation failures, use of non-toxic, non-carcinogenic fire retardants on wood surfaces; fire-stopping measures for farm building attics (if present), and mandatory inspections by the local fire chief.
- 3) Capital costs** associated with implementing the above fire-prevention measures should be tax deductible.

We request the opportunity to meet with you and members of the Standing Committee on Fire Protection to discuss this issue first hand. Please contact us at your earliest convenience to establish a suitable date to meet.

Sincerely,



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Att.s Appendices I and II

cc:

Association of Fire Chiefs
Department of Public Safety, Office of the Fire Marshal New Brunswick
Public Safety and Office of the Fire Marshal, Nova Scotia
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Office of the Fire Marshal, Ontario
Fire Marshal's Office, Office of Public Safety, Prince Edward Island
Yukon Fire Marshal
Fire Marshal, Municipal and Community Affairs, Northwest Territories
Ministère de la Sécurité publique, Quebec
Fire Commissioner, Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General, British Columbia
Fire Commissioner, Manitoba Labour
Acting Fire Marshal, Dept. of Community & Government Service, Nunavut
Fire Commissioner, Alberta Municipal Affairs
Fire Commissioner / Director, Building and Fire Safety Unit, Saskatchewan
Fire Commissioner & Director of NLEMO, Municipal & Provincial Affairs, Newfoundland
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Canadian Farm Builders Association
Canadian Agricultural Safety Association
BC Pork
Alberta Pork
Sask Pork
Manitoba Pork Council
Ontario Pork
Fédération des producteurs de porcs du Québec
Porc NB Pork
PEI Pork
Pork Nova Scotia
Canadian Pork Council
Dairy Farmers of Canada
Chicken Farmers of Canada
Turkey Farmers of Canada
National Farm Animal Care Council
Ontario Farmer
Manitoba Cooperator
Alberta Farmer
Canadian Poultry Magazine
Better Farming
Western Hog Journal
Pork News and Views ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca