

LIVESTOCK RIGHTS

Getting tough on animal transport

"Canadian transport standards are among the worst in the industrial world," Quebec Liberal MP Alexandra Mendes told parliament when she introduced a private member's bill in October that would bring our livestock transportation rules in line with the European Union. "We must look out for our animals' well-being."

Mendes said she was shocked to learn that it is currently legal to let poultry, hogs and horses go without food, water or rest for 36 hours while they're being moved from point A to point B. For cattle, sheep and goats, the figure is 48 hours, while chicks can be confined for as long as 72 hours from the time of hatching.

Long transit times can cause distress and even death, according to animal rights advocates. An estimated three million animals die on their way to slaughterhouses every year across the country.

Bill C-468, seconded by Liberal MP Frank Valeriote and NDP MP Alex Atamanenko, would lower the maximum non-stop transit time to eight hours for horses and pigs and 12 for cattle, sheep, goats and other ruminants.

"This is a non-partisan thing," Canwest News Service quoted Mendes as saying. "Animals don't vote for us. They don't vote for anybody. It's simply trying to protect animals that we are all aware we end up eating, but it doesn't mean they have to suffer."

Mendes has garnered kudos from animal rights groups such as the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals, Animal Alliance of Canada and the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

The argument that, as a big country, Canada needs more lenient rules holds no sway with the bill's supporters.

"If we require a 72-hour journey, for example, to get an animal to a slaughterhouse, it's clear that a more local slaughterhouse needs to be built," said Rebecca Aldworth, director of Humane Society International Canada, in a *Toronto Star* article. "This bill is a fantastic move forward."

~Julie Stauffer

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Food, respect for farmers up

A recent national opinion poll conducted by Nanos Research and USC Canada revealed that not only are the majority of Canadians thinking hard about where their food comes from, they also have considerable respect for the farmers who grew it. The poll found that 70% of Canadians feel that the farmers who grow our food should have more influence on the food system. Nearly as many (67%) trust the experience and knowledge of farmers who grow our food over that of large agricultural corporations. Fully 65% of Canadians agree that when purchasing food it's important to think of the person who grew it, and an equal number are willing to pay more for foods that don't harm the environment. The survey echoes consumer trend reports indicating that more and more Canadians are expressing their values with their purchases – especially when it comes to food.

~Emily McGiffin

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