

Public Workshop for Proposed Animal Care Standards

Livestock Workshop Minutes

December 12, 2011, 3:30 – 5 PM

Scope of Workshop:

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss specific animal care standards for swine, cattle, and small ruminants.

- Attendance: Approximately 10 people, including animal control officers, veterinarians, livestock owners, and 4-H representatives All comments listed below are from citizens or organizations (where specifically noted) unless noted as DEC comments or responses. “OPEN” items are noted for further research and will be discussed further during future sessions.

- SWINE:
 - No comments on stalls or Body Condition Scoring (BCS)
 - Swine producer (by e-mail and on telecon): Traditional small agriculture needs to be protected and is also the fastest growing sector of agriculture. Adequate housing for swine and small ruminants, which I also have, should consist of a 3 sided barn with a roof that can keep the animals dry if they choose to use it. Enclosed structures should have proper ventilation to allow for air flow of the living area for the animals. The structure needs to be big enough to house the animals when they are full grown. Removal of manure is paramount in preventing disease in confinement animals. If there is adequate pasture space to handle the manure from the animals nothing needs to be done to remove it. If the animals are confined manure should be removed regularly to keep a healthy environment. This being said, my goats will get a fresh flake of hay to eat, promptly go to the bathroom on it then lay down on it by their choice. Pigs will take old bedding pee on it and turn it for compost so they can have a heated bed.

But this does not mean the manure is allowed to pile up in the housing they sleep in. Farmers should have the right to provide standard medical and herd maintenance, such as distributing antibiotics, wormers, castration, hoof trimming and the like. Farmers should have the right to slaughter animals on farm for personal use. A squeeze chute, killing crate or some other method of keeping the animal still should be used to ensure a clean kill shot, nothing smaller than a 22 long rifle cartridge should be used. The placement of the killing shot will vary on the type of animal. Access to clean and abundant drinking water is of the utmost importance as well as a consistent food supply. With swine the traditions of feeding range from skip day feeding to unlimited feeding. I don't agree with skip day feeding, but I think farmers should be able to do it if they choose. Farmers should be allowed to manage their operation in a way that works for their location and desires for proper production.

- DEC: We were not aware of the practice of skip day feeding and will research the practice. (OPEN)

- CATTLE:

- Veterinarian: I use Body Condition Scoring (BCS) systems (DEC: as referenced in the draft regulation) daily in my medical records on patients in my practice.
- The draft has a requirement for feeding/watering/offloading of cattle of 28 consecutive hours. It can be difficult to find a spot to stop and offload in Canada. This should be lengthened.
- DEC: The 28 hour rule is consistent with U.S. Federal standards and other states. This issue has been raised in other workshops also. Of course it would be difficult to even drive for 28 hours straight in Alaska. We will research how such a rule would need to be viewed by the legal system, and whether the clock would start ticking when a person crossed the border into Alaska or might include time spent on Canadian roadways. Canada has its own

rules for transportation and does have designated rest stops for livestock haulers. Alaska does not, and although it could be easy enough to pull off a road and let a horse out to move around, the same cannot be said for swine or cattle. (OPEN)

- What about food and water access for free range cattle? Beef cattle don't need as much water as dairy cattle. Does snow count as "daily access to water"?
- Mat-Su Animal Control Board member/Veterinarian: Animal Control officers may insist upon liquid water, this should be clarified.
- The regulation should specify that snow is OK.
- Alternate verbiage about snow being not the primary source might be appropriate.
- DEC: This issue has also been explored in horse and diversified livestock workshops. We understand that free range animals can utilize snow as a source of water. Some of the considerations in crafting functional verbiage for this issue include:
 - Animals will require daily access to a source of water in sufficient quantity and quality to satisfy the animal's physiologic needs as evidenced by the horse's hydration status.
 - Animals in more confined spaces may not be acclimated or used to consuming snow as a source of water and/or not have access to snow that is suitable (not packed snow or ice) for consumption. .
 - Water freezes so quickly in some places so water may need to be offered twice a day.
 - Packed snow or ice is not an accessible source of water.
 - The words "palatable" and/or "accessible" may be useful.
 - Webster's dictionary defines water as liquid.

The basic goal of the section on water is to ensure that animals have sufficient amounts to maintain good health. The draft

regulation approaches this from an endpoint perspective (evaluation of the hydration status), with a veterinarian's opinion being the bottom line. We will consider further suggestions for functional wording on this issue. (OPEN)

○ SMALL RUMINANTS:

- No specific comments on small ruminants.
- Guardian dogs for goats and sheep were discussed.
- Producer: I would desire to see the use of Livestock Guardian dogs protected. (NOTE: Livestock Guardian Dog (LGD) breeds have been used for centuries to protect livestock from predators in Europe and Asia. The most well-known of these breeds in the United States are the Great Pyrenees, Anatolian Shepherds, Akbash and Maremma.) There are traditional breeds that adopt herds and faithfully protect them from bears, wolves, coyotes, ravens, domestic dogs, and any other opportunistic predators. A farmer with a herd cannot live with the herd all the time and even if they sleep near their herd they have to go to town for supplies and in Alaska that can mean a trip of several days. There needs to be allowance of guardians to protect and preserve the flock. The guardian needs to be able to move and stay with the herd wherever they are allowed to roam. This can mean (allowing for adequate food) days without seeing the farmer.
- Veterinarian: I take care of animals on four farms that use these dogs.
- DEC: Current draft does not prohibit Guardian dogs' lifestyle as described.

○ OPEN FORUM:

- Participant not pleased about animal care standards in general. Animals are not humans, they are our private property and the government should leave us alone.

- Veterinarian: Horses free ranging on snow do OK but they don't get supplemental dry feed, thus they don't need as much water for digestive function.
- Producer: I've been complained on by neighbors because my pigs were squealing and animal control came out to see if I was castrating. Animal Control may not understand what is acceptable or not when it comes to animal husbandry. I'd like to see regulations to prohibit local boroughs from making rules that are more restrictive than state regulations.
- Producer: There is a state farm law that protects farmers from that sort of thing.
 - DEC: We do not have statutory authority to disallow local governments from setting stricter standards. We do hope that the development of these standards assists local authorities in their understanding of animal husbandry.
 - DEC: The statute that was referenced above is AS 09.45.235. "Agricultural operation as private nuisance"

Other workshops have brought out the fact that there are a many instances of animal neglect that may be best addressed on the local level, with local ordinances and appropriate enforcement, including citations with civil penalties for lesser types of offenses. The DEC does not have authority to define different levels of animal cruelty offenses. Our goal is to make the regulations as clear as possible for enforcement authorities. Once regulations are adopted, our office can certainly help local authorities decide if any particular activity constitutes a violation of the state regulations.