

ACTIVISTS

For Internal Use Only

BACKGROUND

Whether online, through media or in person, anti-animal agriculture activist messaging and tactics can be frustrating and even frightening. It is important that any interaction the Canadian beef industry has with activists is respectful, informative and maintains the integrity of our industry. Consumer research shows most Canadians have a positive impression of the Canadian beef sector. Activists are therefore a very small but very vocal group that warrant monitoring, but generally not direct engagement.

KEY MESSAGES

- Canadian farmers and ranchers work hard to care for their animals all day, 365 days a year. A farmer's primary concern is always the health and welfare of their animals.
- The land that farmers and ranchers use is not only their place of work, but also their home. They care for the animals they raise, the ecosystems they help protect, and have demonstrated a growing commitment to sustainability.
- The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle outlines industry standards including required and best practices demonstrating the industry's commitment to the humane treatment and care of cattle¹.

IN-PERSON ACTIVIST TACTICS

If you are organizing a conference or event, discuss the potential for activists with venue/event security, develop a protocol and allow them to lead and manage any situations that arise. Ensure staff and participants know the appropriate person in security to contact².

- Do not engage
- Do not confront
- Call building security or the police immediately
- Do not use force to remove them, leave that to security or police²



GENERAL GUIDELINES: ENCOUNTERING ACTIVISTS

Activists should never be engaged with directly without first consulting the appropriate industry staff and resources. Why? Whether intentional or not, the actions of one individual can be portrayed as a representative of the industry, and even a seemingly neutral interaction can be used out of context to paint the industry in a negative light.

Anti-animal agriculture activists have one goal: to end the practice of raising animals for food entirely, and they cannot be convinced otherwise. Messaging is most effective when it is directed towards the general public, and not specifically toward activists.

WHO ARE MY POINTS OF CONTACT, IN THE EVENT OF A PROTEST?

Key organizations and points of contact will vary based on where the activists are located and which aspects of the industry they are protesting. For example, if a protest is taking place at an event or show (i.e. The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair (RAWF)) the following organizations would be involved:

- The event team (in this case, the RAWF livestock team).
- The provincial cattle organization (in this case, Beef Farmers of Ontario).
- National organizations (like Canadian Cattle Association) will play a supporting role, providing messaging, staff support, and assistance with media where necessary.

As a collaborative industry, our members are committed to supporting each other to help educate and share accurate information with all stakeholders.



ENCOUNTERING ACTIVISTS ON FARM

- In recent years, on-farm activist activity and protests have been successful in garnering media attention. Protests or activist tactics on farm can include trespassing, occupying buildings, letting livestock loose or undercover recordings. These can pose a risk to the safety of farmers, activists and animals³. It is important that these situations are handled carefully and properly. Some provinces have passed legislation to protect farmers against these intrusions.
- When hiring employees, consider utilizing the background check service provided by Public and Stakeholder Engagement (PSE). This can identify if the individual has known ties to animal activist associations.
- Controlling entry ways to the property with locks, keypads, doors and gates to discourage unwanted access.
- Posting no trespassing and biosecurity signs around property.
- Installing motion-sensor lighting, barn alarms and surveillance features where appropriate.
- Developing a process for employees to determine if someone is a legitimate visitor.

ONLINE ACTIVIST ACTIVITY

If activists confront you or your organization online, it is important to keep the interaction brief, objective and positive. It can be difficult to separate true anti-animal agriculture activists from the misinformed in an online setting; always err on the side of caution.

Be aware of what you post online - remember that anything you share has the potential to be used or altered to portray the industry in a negative light. This includes pictures of sick, injured or stuck animals, even if accompanied by an explanation.

Images and videos can easily be copied and used out of context to misrepresent animal care and welfare practices. Remember that you represent your farm, ranch, or industry organization, but also the broader beef community.

Be aware that the more you engage with this type of content, the more it will be placed in your social feeds.

If you decide to post or comment to address misinformation (and have consulted industry staff), please keep the following tips in mind:

- Objectively provide information and examples without specifically addressing the previous post. Double check facts and provide sources when available.
- Keep tone positive and informative.
- Do NOT curse, call names, or use derogatory language, even if others have done so.
- Be timely, but don't post angry or upset. Write a response, have a member of the team review it, then send.
- Ensure proper spelling, grammar, and terminology. This will add credibility to your message.
- Increased engagement on a negative post (through comments, shares, etc.) will boost it in the algorithm, expanding to a larger audience.
- If the content is true misinformation, report the post (this option is normally in the top right corner).
- Contact Public & Stakeholder Engagement. We can take the appropriate actions depending on the situation.

Beef Advocacy Canada

A free, online self-guided program contains the key messages, tools and strategies needed to communicate in a way that is likely to be understood and resonate with consumers both online and in person.



Visit www.beefadvocacy.ca to get started.

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1. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (2013). National Farm Animal Care Council. <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle> (Accessed Jan. 24, 2024)
2. Managing disruptions at events. Farm and Food Care Ontario, 2022. <https://www.farmfoodcareon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Managing-Disruptions-at-Events.pdf> (Accessed Jan 25, 2024)
3. Protecting yourself from animal rights activism starts on the farm. Animal Agriculture Alliance, February 28, 2022. <https://animalagalliance.org/protecting-yourself-from-animal-rights-activism-starts-on-the-farm/>. (Accessed January 25, 2024)