

Canadian Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Bison

International Bison Conference

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Big Sky, MT

Jayson Galbraith, PhD, P.Ag.

Bison/Elk Specialist

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry





NATIONAL FARM ANIMAL CARE COUNCIL
CONSEIL NATIONAL POUR LES SOINS AUX ANIMAUX D'ÉLEVAGE

CODE OF PRACTICE



FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF

BISON

Canada

August 9, 2017

What does all this mean to these guys?



7 Chapters in the Code, Plus Appendices

Chapters:

1. Animal Environment
2. Feed and Water
3. Animal Health
4. Herd Management
5. Handling
6. Transportation
7. On-Farm Euthanasia

Appendices:

- A. Stocking Rates for Pasture
- B. Preventing Escaped Bison
- C. Body Condition Scoring
- D. Bison Flight Zone
- E. Bison Processing Welfare Audit
- F. Orphaned Calves
- G. Transport Decision Tree
- H. Further Resources
- I. Participants

Meet 'CUB'



- The Bison Code is:
 - Practical
 - Has an impact the welfare of bison

Section 4.4 - Calving



Bison cows calve in April to late June. Bison normally calve for the first time at three years of age. With proper nutrition bison cows will calve annually and usually without assistance.

... Under Canada's climatic conditions, bison calve without the use of shelters. Calving without shelters is consistent with the evolutionary history of bison and is the preferred approach to minimize stress for cows while calving. [...]

... Occasionally, orphan calves will occur in a herd as a result of twinning or they may be abandoned by their mothers. If left alone, abandoned calves will likely die of starvation.

Strategies are available to increase the survival rate of orphaned bison

Section 4.4 - Calving



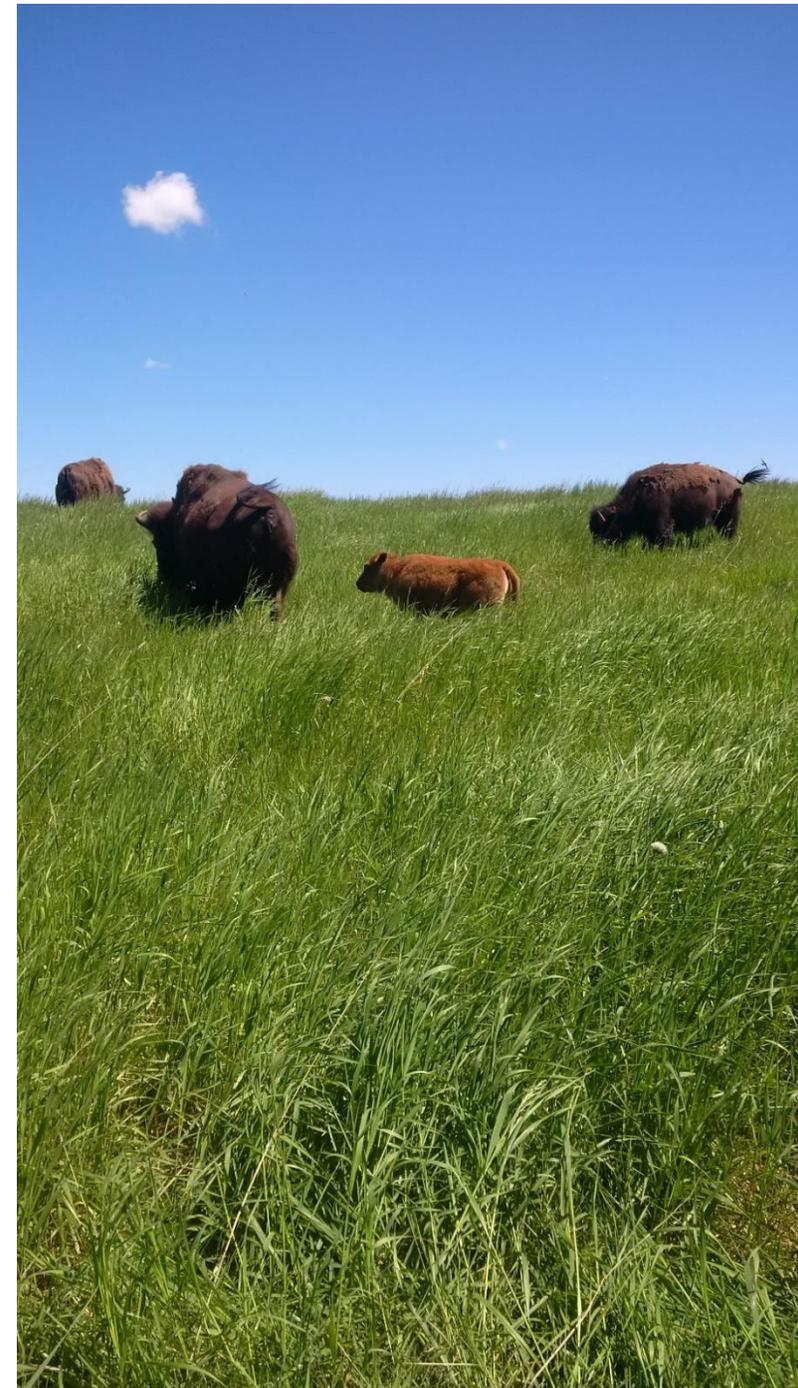
REQUIREMENTS

Producers must be able to recognize and deal with distressed cows or calves and, if there are no suitable intervention or treatment options, ensure that bison be euthanized to avoid further suffering.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- provide bison cows with access to clean, spacious pastures that will allow them to move away from the herd to calve when needed.
- provide bison cows with access to high/dry ground for the comfort of the cow and calf during wet weather
- personnel are familiar with procedures to address welfare concerns in the event of calving problems.

Chapter 1: Animal Environment





Section 1.4 Fencing

Secure fencing is essential to containing bison. Bison are unlikely to challenge fencing if they have sufficient grass, minerals, water and room to evade more dominant animals.

No single fence design is suitable for all landscapes, site conditions or containment requirements. Hence, fencing should be designed to meet or facilitate the unique needs of individual operations (while accommodating provincial regulations regarding acceptable fencing provisions or practices). It is the responsibility of those overseeing the care of bison to ensure containment.

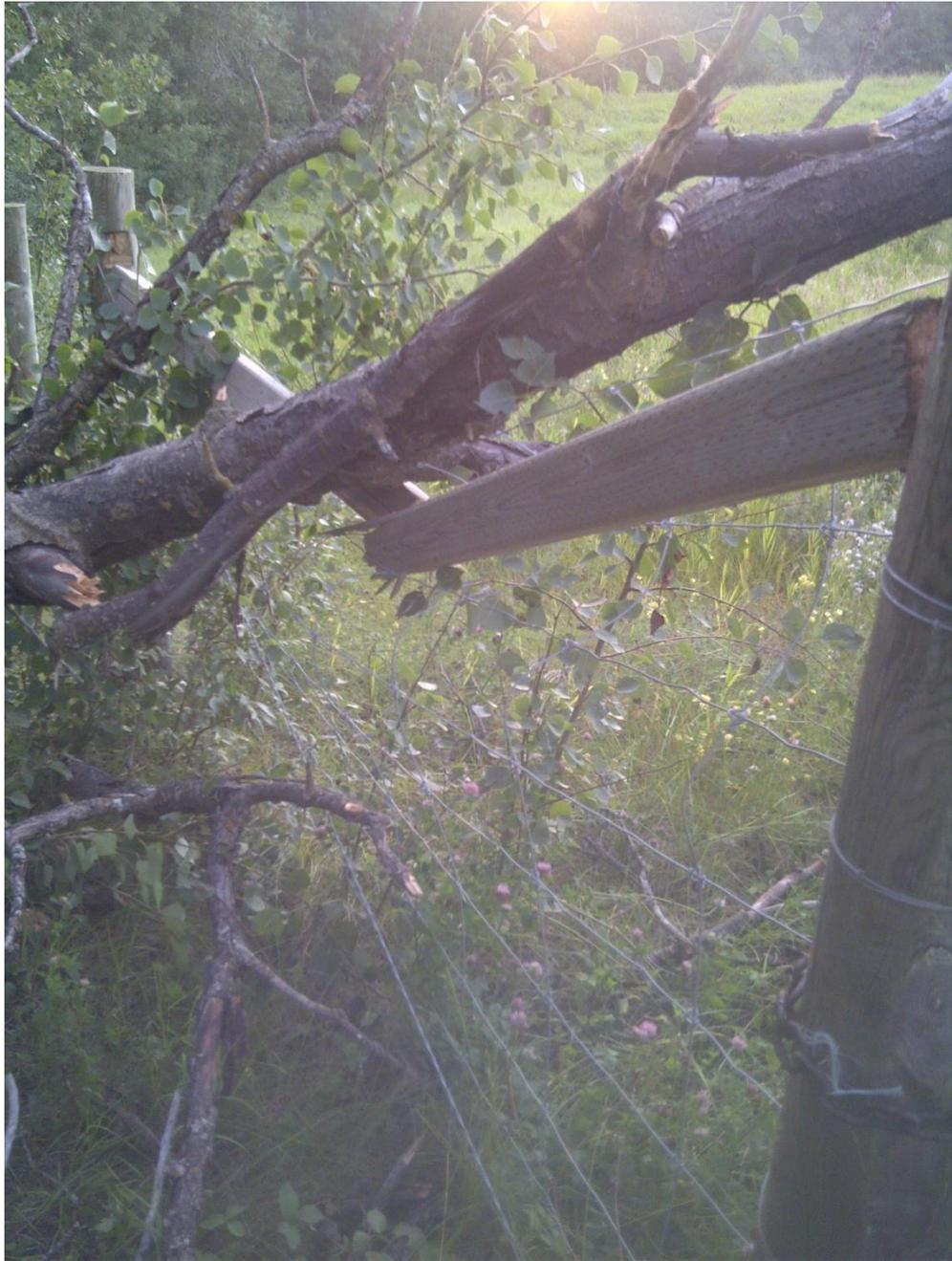
Fencing should be built with the topography of the land in mind. Upward slopes can enhance the effective height of a fence. Fallen limbs, vegetation cover or packed snow may compromise effective fence heights.

REQUIREMENTS

- Perimeter fences must be well constructed and regularly maintained.









Section 4.5- Weaning Bison





Section 4.5- Weaning Bison

Bison are herd animals that maintain a strong social structure. Weaning can be a very stressful time for both calves and cows. Traditional weaning involves removing all calves at one time, placing them in a pen out of sight (and out of hearing range) from the cows, and then allowing them to settle over a few days. This is a recommended process as the apparent stress of weaning eases after approximately three days. It is also beneficial to introduce older bison surrogates to maintain a level of calmness among the calves when weaning.

REQUIREMENTS

- Weaned calves must have access to fresh water, mineral and feed.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- *wean calves older than 6 months of age*
- *avoid “fence-line” weaning*



Section 4.6 – Identification

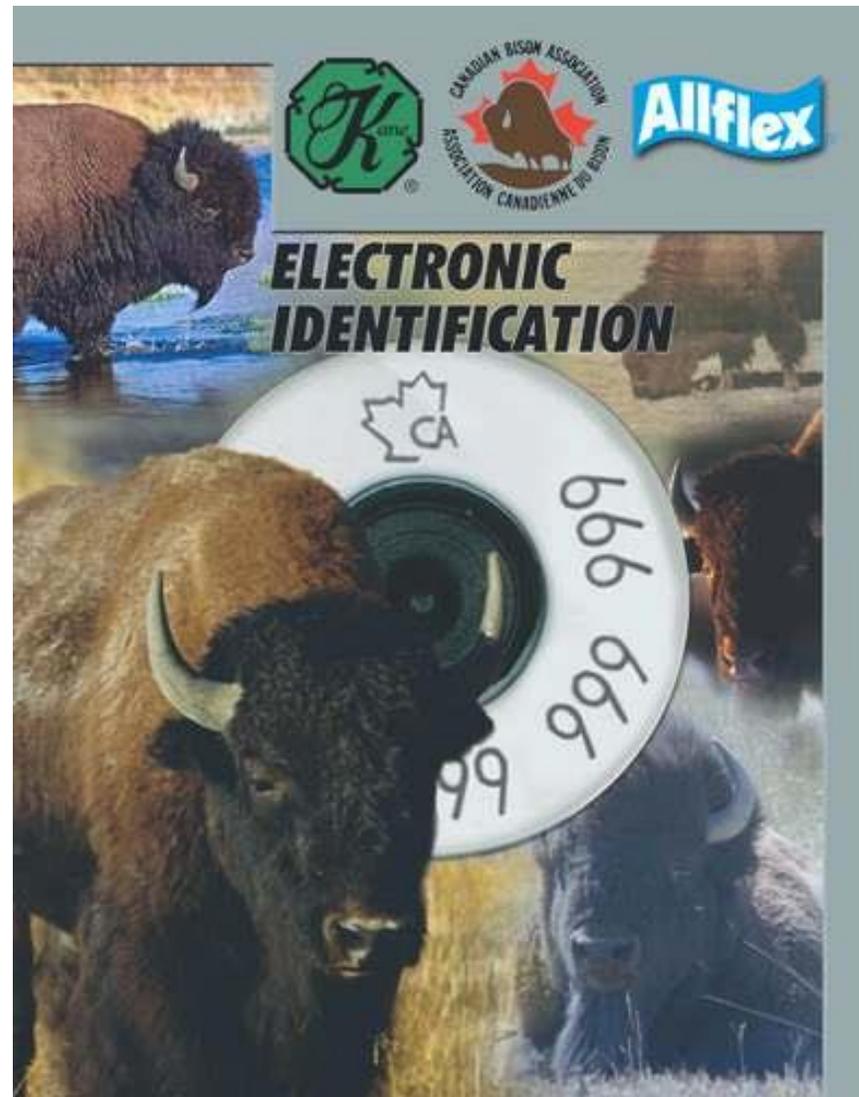
All bison are to be identified with an approved bison tag when they leave their farm of origin or are being transported to a designated tagging facility.

REQUIREMENTS

- All bison must be identified using an approved tag for bison as stipulated by applicable federal regulations.
- Tags or identification devices must be applied as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Branding bison for herd identification purposes must not be practiced.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- use visual herd management tags to facilitate individual bison management within a herd
- maintain all identification equipment in working order.



Chapter 5: Handling

- In the Handling chapter
- “For bison to experience minimal stress, discomfort or injury during handling while necessary husbandry tasks are conducted...”



Section 5.2- Facility Design

Handling can be stressful to bison. Bison will typically progress through a handling system smoothly and efficiently if there are no perceived threats. The goal in designing a good flow-through, passive system is to reduce as much stress, and potential trauma, as possible. **It is best to use the minimum of everything required to process bison – including people, movement, sound and prods.** A well-designed handling facility should create a free-flow environment where bison have a natural tendency to move easily through alleys [...]

Section 5.2- Facility Design

REQUIREMENTS

- Designs that directly and routinely contribute to animal welfare issues such as injuries or excessive stress must be corrected.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

- avoid sharp contrasts in natural or artificial lighting to minimize shadows
- monitor slips and falls and take action to improve footing traction and animal safety
- use rounded corners in pens and curved alleys/races to avoid sharp corners, square or dead ends...







Handling Devices





Tipped - De-Horned - Horned



CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING
OF BISON: REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON
PRIORITY ISSUES

October 2016

Bison Code of Practice Scientists' Committee

John Church Ph.D. (Chair)
Associate Professor (Cattle Research Chair)
Thompson Rivers University

Jayson Galbraith Ph.D.
Bison/Elk Specialist
Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

Rob McCorkell D.V.M., Ph.D.
Associate Professor (Game Farm and Wildlife)
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Calgary

Fiona C. Rioja-Lang Ph.D.
Research Writer

Mark Silzer (Ex officio)
Canadian Bison Association
Bison Code Development Committee Chair



Priority Welfare Issues (PWI):

- How does **seasonality** affect the nutritional requirements of bison (i.e., specifically heifers)?
 - including minerals
- Appropriate **euthanasia**/slaughter on farm (including field harvest)
- Understanding **bison behaviour**, specifically males, females, young. Body language
 - Including requirements for wallowing and rubbing
 - Including requirements (for needing / not needing) bedding, shade, wind protection
- **Pain**
 - Recognizing and identifying pain (including dehorning)
 - When to intervene?
 - What is a painful process for bison?
 - Dystocia
 - Semen collection: is there pain associated with different methods?

Management practices- dehorning and tipping

Management practices, handling techniques and commercial handling facilities and systems have all improved in recent years. As a result, it is generally recognized that dehorning non-breeding animals (feeders) is no longer necessary. Hence, dehorning is a declining practice. Under some management scenarios, there is an animal welfare benefit to dehorning breeding females to reduce goring. **The individual animal welfare costs of dehorning must be balanced with the herd-level animal welfare benefits of the practice.**

REQUIREMENTS

- When dehorning [...], pain control must be used in consultation with a veterinarian.
- Dehorning must only be performed by competent personnel using proper, well-maintained tools and accepted techniques.
- Non-breeding bison must not be dehorned.

Chapter 3: Animal Health

- **Desired Outcome:** Optimum health and welfare are maintained through a proactive approach to disease prevention, control measures and the prompt treatment of illness, injury and disease.

REQUIREMENTS

- [...]
- the welfare of bison must not suffer for lack of professional consultation regarding necessary actions pertaining to herd health, nutrition, handling or facility design



Chapter 2: Feed and Water



Nutrition and Feed Management 2.1

...Recommended practice

- Become familiar with potential micronutrient deficiencies or excesses in your geographic area and use appropriately formulated supplements
- Remove twine or netting from baled forage
- Adult bison should be fed to gain 10-15% BW from May – Dec and lose that gain Dec-May

Chapter 6: Transportation

- **Desired Outcome:** To prepare bison so they experience minimal stress during the transportation process and to arrive at their destination in good health and condition.





**FIT
ANIMALS
TRANSPORT**

- Those that are expected to arrive at their final destination in good condition
- According to the *Health of Animals Regulations Part XII* and CFIA policies
- Consult also current *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals: Transportation*.



***Special Provisions for Compromised Animals**

Compromised animals, if loaded, must be transported **directly** to the nearest appropriate place to receive care, treatment, be slaughtered or euthanized – but only with special provisions, such as:

- Local direct transport only
- Extra bedding
- Loading in a rear compartment
- Separation from other animals
- **Other measures as appropriate**, e.g. veterinary assessment prior to loading when unsure of the animal's capacity to withstand transportation.



**COMPROMISED
ANIMALS
TRANSPORT
WITH SPECIAL
PROVISIONS***

*Compromised Animals Policy
(Health of Animals Regulations
Part XII)*

Examples:

- Bloating (if not weak or already down)
- Blindness in both eyes
- Open wound (depending on the severity of the wound, the animal may be unfit, e.g. goring)
- Not fully healed after an operation, such as dehorning or castration
- Rectal or vaginal prolapse
- Abscess
- Acute penis injury
- Unhealed broken tail or jaw
- Amputation or deformity (only if fully-healed and not painful. Horn cap injuries excluded.)
- Fractured facial bones

Do not continue to transport an animal that becomes compromised or unfit beyond the nearest appropriate place where it can receive care, be euthanized or slaughtered.



**UNFIT
ANIMALS
DO NOT
TRANSPORT**

*Other than for veterinary
diagnosis or care*

Examples:

- Unable to rise, remain standing, or move without assistance, reluctant to move (non-ambulatory)
- Severe lameness*
- Fractured limb or pelvis
- Likely to give birth
- Having given birth in the preceding 48 hours
- Uterine prolapse
- Arthritis in multiple joints
- Pneumonia (unresponsive with fever, e.g. Mycoplasma)
- Nervous disorder (e.g. rabies – must be reported to CFIA)
- Emaciation or dehydration
- Fever, shock or dying.

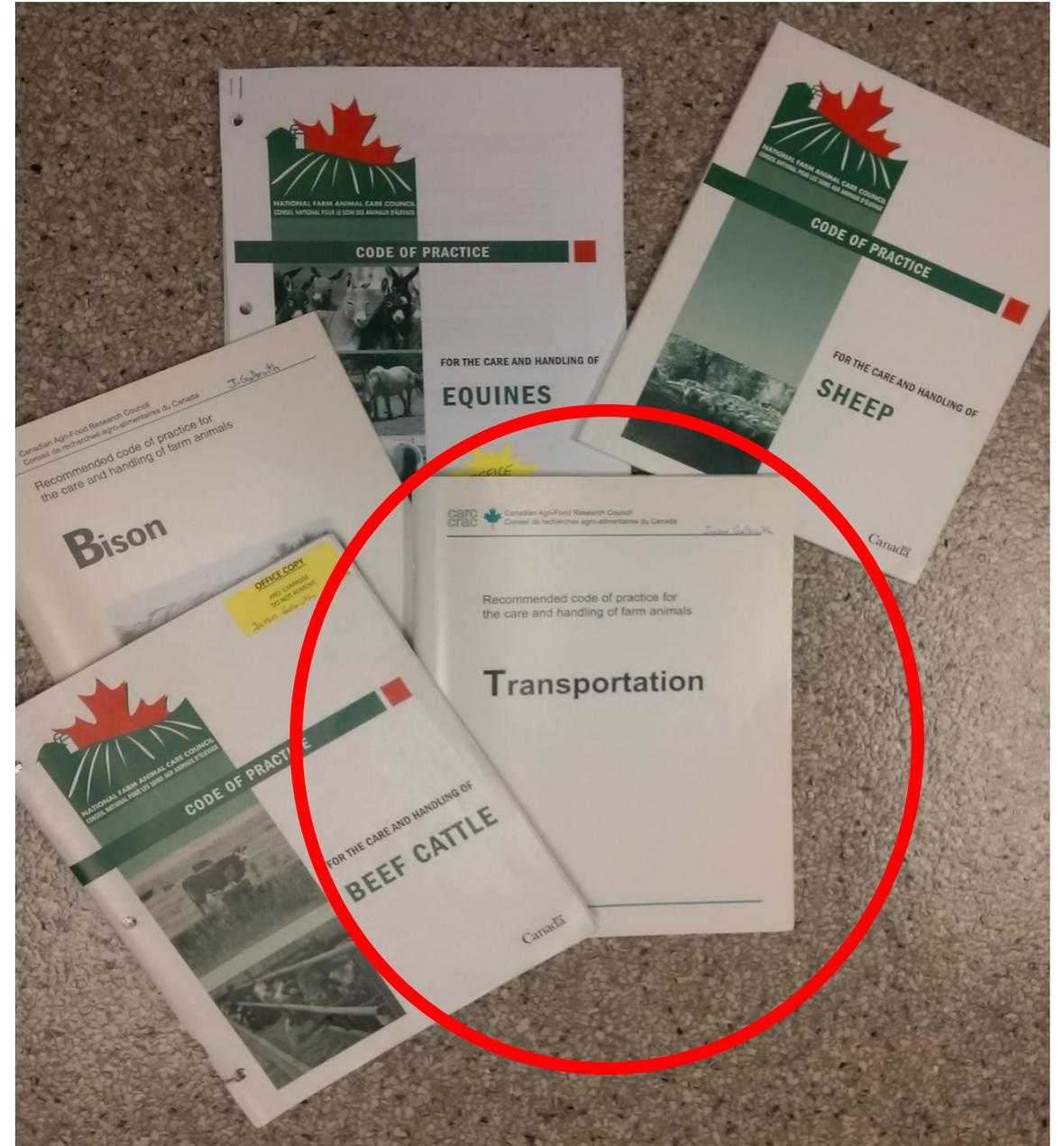
* See current HAR's

Transport Decision Tree

Table adapted from: *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (2013)*. Available at: <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle>

Transportation

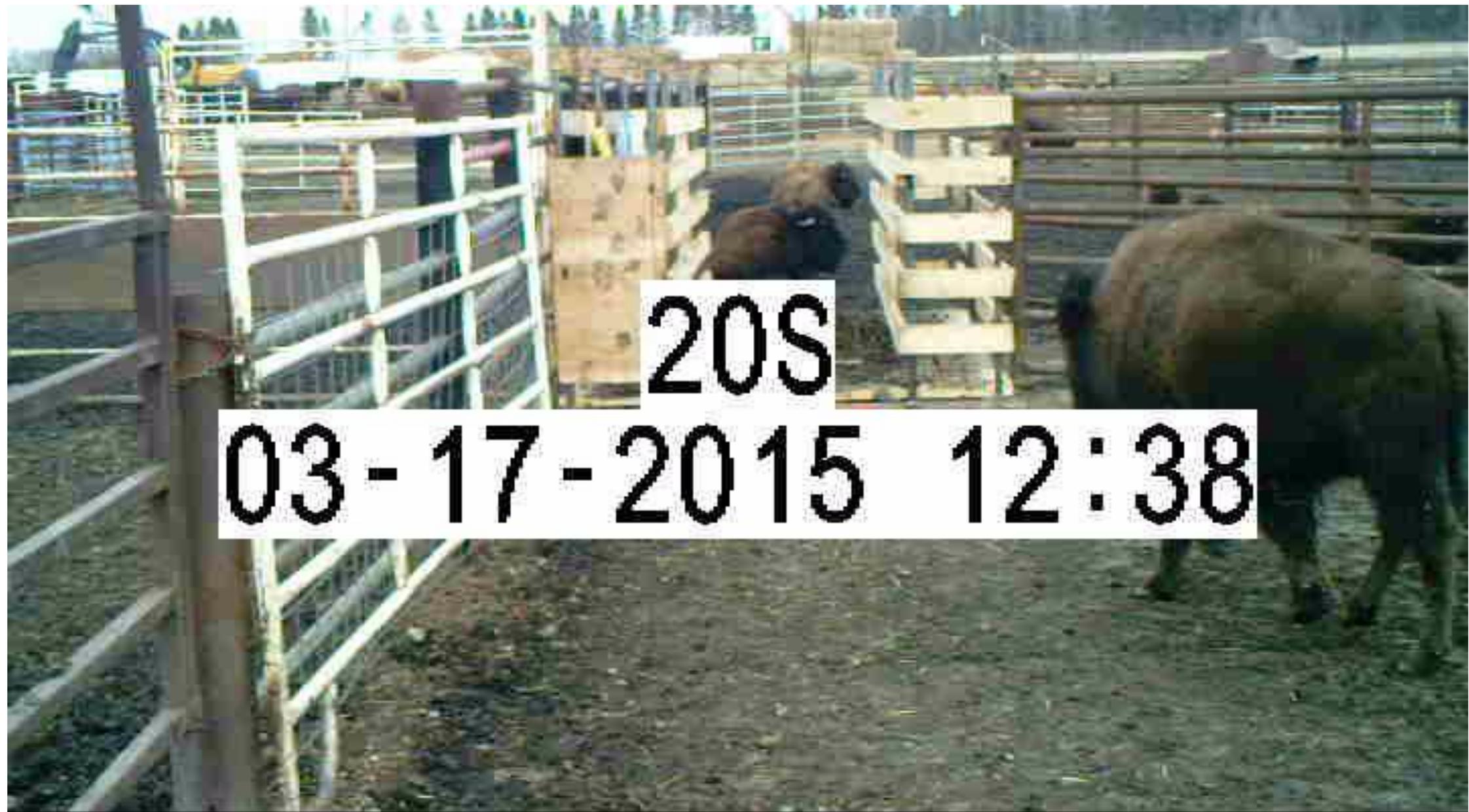
- Pre-Transport Decision Making and Preparation
 - Grouping
 - Determination of fit or unfit animal
- Arranging transport
- Loading and Receiving





Future research- Examples from the scientific report

- Bison specific research into **nutritional requirements**, including vitamin and minerals, for various stages of growth.
- **Feeding of bison heifers and cows** for optimal production
- There are currently no bison specific published scientific papers regarding **bison euthanasia techniques** (although there are several sets of guidelines from various professional bodies).
- A better understanding of **basic bison behavior** and body language would lead to lower stress during handling, improved round up methods, improved stock-worker safety, and could be used to improve handling facilities.



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Codes Of Practice

Current

- [Beef Cattle](#)
- [Chickens, Turkeys and Breeders](#)
- [Dairy Cattle](#)
- [Equine](#)
- [Farmed Deer](#)
- [Farmed Fox](#)
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- [Poultry - Layers](#)
- [Sheep](#)
- [Transportation](#)

Under Revision

- [Bison](#)
- [Rabbits](#)
- [Veal Cattle](#)

Code Development

Progress

- [Development Steps](#)
- [Public Comment Period](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Brief History of the Codes](#)

[The Codes in Action](#)

Bison

- [Review of scientific research on priority issues](#) - October 2016
- [Current Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Bison \(2001\)](#) • [Factsheet](#)
- [Media Release Review of Canada's Bison Code of Practice has begun](#) • Feb 2015

Code revision initiated	December 2014
Public comment period	November 21 - January 19, 2017
Estimated Code release date	Spring 2017

Code Development Progress

The process for updating the Code of Practice for bison began December 2014, using the NFACC [Code development process](#). The Canadian Bison Association initiated the review.

- [Progress reports](#)
- [Code development timeline](#)

Priority Welfare Issues List

The priority welfare issues are topics that are considered to be important for animal welfare and that will require particular attention in a review of the available scientific literature.

The Scientific Committee (SC) and Code Development Committee (CDC) collectively identified the priority welfare issues list at their inaugural meeting in March 2015. The SC will undertake a review of the scientific research on these priority issues and develop a report synthesizing/summarizing the research. The SC will also identify gaps that would benefit from further research. See full [SC Terms of Reference](#).

The CDC will use the SC report to develop requirements and recommendations around the priority welfare issues. Other topics not on the final priority welfare issues list but that are important to animal welfare will still be included in the Code.

Following is the priority welfare issues list for the bison Code update:





Thank-you