

ANIMAL WELFARE IN A BILATERAL TRADE POLICY FRAMEWORK:
CASE STUDY ON THE EUROPEAN UNION–CANADA
EQUIVALENCY AGREEMENT ON SLAUGHTER

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For more than 10 years, animal welfare has been in the OIE mandate, with specific references included in the 3rd and successive OIE Strategic Plans. What had once been considered to be a technical field of interest only to academics has since become a major topic in international negotiations on animal health, food safety and trade policy.

In 1999 Canada and the European Union (EU) entered into a Veterinary Agreement. Under this Agreement, decision makers from the EU (DG SANCO) and Canada (the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA) meet in the Joint Management Committee (JMC) to discuss questions of mutual importance, such as disease control measures, import/export certification and technical matters. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Agreement, animal welfare has been a high profile technical matter for discussion.

In terms of the WTO SPS Agreement and the EU-Canada Agreement, measures do not need to be ‘the same’ in order to achieve equivalency. Decisions that different measures are equivalent must be based on understanding and acceptance of the context and rationale of both parties. Such decisions cannot be established on a simple ‘line by line’ comparison of regulatory requirements. Rather, Canada and the EU have made a commitment to share information on respective contexts and regulatory frameworks to maintain this trust.

European Union Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing will come into force on January 1, 2013. In preparation, the CFIA has taken steps to identify where measures are identical, similar or slightly different, with respect to key issues, such as: the use of written procedures to assure animal welfare; formal training of slaughtermen and other operators, and consistent use of appropriate stunning practices.

CFIA experts in humane handling and slaughter of livestock have developed guidance for federal inspectors and regulated operators on how to conduct operations that comply with current regulations and with OIE animal welfare standards on animal welfare.

This paper concludes that the EU-Canada Veterinary Agreement has been a driver for closer scrutiny and, in some cases, improved animal welfare in Canada.

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