



# TRANSFORMING OUR BEHAVIOURS TO TRANSFORM ANIMAL LIVES

INDICATORS OF A HUMANE CANADA:  
THE RESPONSIBILITY KEYSTONE



**HUMANE  
CANADA**

THE FEDERATION OF SPCAs  
AND HUMANE SOCIETIES



## Indicators of a Humane Canada: The Responsibility Keystone

How do we know whether Canada is humane, or whether we are even making progress as a country toward becoming more humane? Answering these questions requires measuring and tracking indicators that inform us about attitudes toward animals,<sup>1</sup> how they are treated, and how they are situated within Canadian social and political structures.

Identifying a list of such indicators is exactly what Humane Canada set out to do, as described in our report, *Measuring Progress Toward a Humane Canada*. That report laid out a framework and cast a vision of what a humane country could look like. It presented over 40 indicators that can be tracked to infer progress toward that goal.

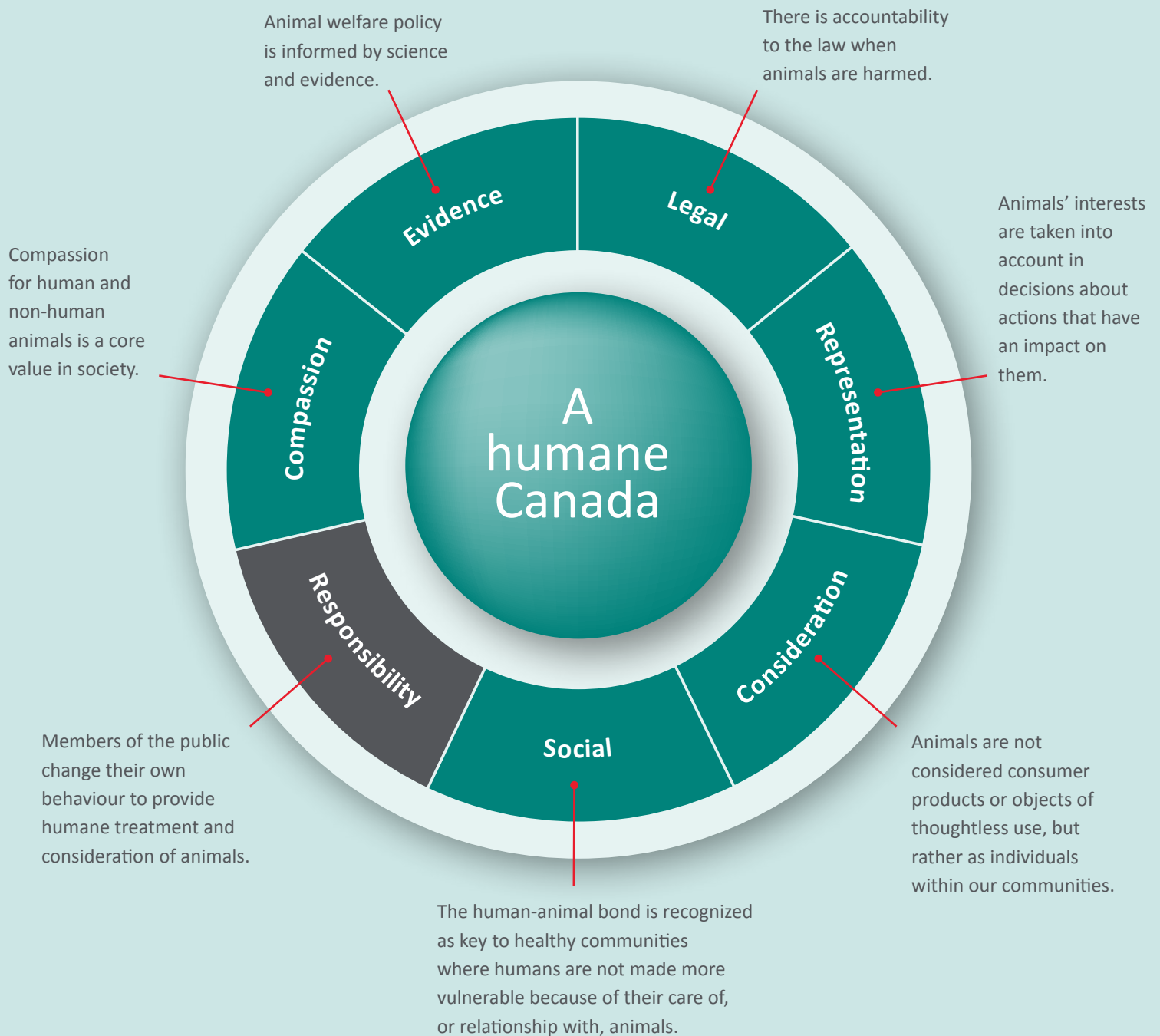
In this report, we assess the current status of indicators of the Responsibility Keystone, looking at how members of the public can change their own behaviour to provide humane treatment and consideration for animals. We all have choices in how we act. Reflecting about what others need and keeping in mind the impact of our actions on others, including animals, demonstrates a compassionate and ethical perspective. In some cases, our behaviours impact animals directly, such as when we choose activities our companion animals will engage in. In other cases, our impact is indirect, for example, via market signals we send through purchases or investment choices. When it comes to indirect impacts, individuals often rely on information and decisions of entities, such as businesses, service providers, and public institutions. In all cases, ethical considerations should guide our decision-making about animal use and must be supported by transparent and reliable information. In a humane country, we recognize the impact of our actions on others and take responsibility<sup>2</sup> to make choices that improve the welfare of animals.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, the term “animals” refers to non-human animals.

<sup>2</sup> “Responsibility” is explicitly mentioned in the underlying principles supporting One Health, according to the United Nations One Health High-Level Expert Panel: “Key underlying principles include ... stewardship and the responsibility of humans to change behaviour and adopt sustainable solutions that recognize the importance of animal welfare and the integrity of the whole ecosystem, thus securing the well-being of current and future generations.” See: Adisasmito, W.B., et al. (2022). One Health: A new definition for a sustainable and healthy future. *PLoS Pathogens* 18(6): e1010537. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.ppat.1010537>

# THE KEYSTONES OF A HUMANE CANADA

*Measuring Progress Toward a Humane Canada* lays out a framework that recognizes seven different keystones, or foundations, of a humane Canada. Within each keystone there are enabling conditions—aspects that make it possible for the keystone to be achieved. The indicators identified can be used to measure and infer progress for each enabling condition. For more information on the full project, please visit the [project webpage](#). Humane Canada has set out to measure each keystone in turn, focusing in this report on the Responsibility Keystone. Each of the four indicators below is listed under the enabling condition it measures.





## Responsibility keystone indicators and their status

INDICATOR	STATUS
<b>Rs<sub>1</sub></b> Companion animal trainers use humane training methods	
<b>Rs<sub>2</sub></b> Meaningful animal welfare labelling systems used in Canada	
<b>Rs<sub>3</sub></b> Declining per capita meat consumption	
<b>Rs<sub>4</sub></b> Top corporations in Canada reference animal welfare in their policies	

Good/Trending in the right direction

Fair/More needed

Poor



### ENABLING CONDITION

*Humane, evidence-based information and resources regarding behaviour and training of companion animals are widely available and used by pet owners or guardians.*

## Indicator Rs<sub>1</sub>

### Companion animal trainers use humane training methods

***Finding: In the province of British Columbia, AnimalKind provides accreditation services and helpful information for dog owners seeking humane training services. Out of 240 dog training businesses in BC, 35 were accredited with AnimalKind. A published review of the websites of dog training businesses in the province of British Columbia found that 72% were using only humane methods. In the rest of the country, there is a lack of meaningful systems to ensure high welfare practices are used, and it falls to dog owners to evaluate trainers to ensure they are using reward-based methods.***

Our actions tend to have the greatest impact on those closest to us, such as those with whom we live, including companion animals. We have a responsibility for the situations we put our pets in, including the training we provide. Dog training that involves responding to undesired behaviours with punishment (e.g., hitting, choking, shocking) leads to persistent higher levels of stress, increased aggression, lower learning ability and affiliative behaviour, and overall lower welfare in dogs.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, reward-based training – training that rewards desired behaviours with treats or other positive outcomes, rather than punishing undesired behaviours – promotes higher welfare and improved learning in dogs, and results in a stronger human-animal bond.

<sup>3</sup> Makowska, I.J. and Cavalli, C.M. (2023). *Review of dog training methods: welfare, learning ability, and current standards*. BC SPCA: Vancouver, Canada. <https://animalkind.ca/wp-content/uploads/dog-training-methods-review.pdf>

### What you can do

- If you live in BC, look for AnimalKind-accredited trainers.
- Look for trainers who use rewards, rather than punishment, to motivate your dog's training.
- If training your dog yourself, use rewards to encourage good behaviour rather than punishing undesired behaviour.
- Review the quick reference guides at the end of this section for tips to ensure your companion animal receives humane training.

In Canada, companion animal training is unregulated, which means that anyone can offer these services regardless of whether they have any relevant certifications or training. While it is important for people to be able to make informed decisions about training services for their animals, it is not always easy to determine which trainers will provide the best conditions for one's companions. The reference guides below provide helpful pointers.<sup>4</sup>

In Canada, individuals can earn dog trainer qualifications based on completing a knowledge assessment. A variety of certifying organizations award such qualifications, which essentially distinguishes trainers who have invested time into learning about leading training practices. Only one body in Canada looks beyond the individual level and also incorporates a review of larger business practices into an organizational accreditation scheme. This is BC SPCA with their AnimalKind program. AnimalKind offers accreditation to dog training organizations that demonstrate a commitment to humane, reward-based training.<sup>5</sup> Their accreditation standards require all trainers in the organization to be qualified by the certifying organizations noted above. However, there are additional requirements, namely, to use humane and reward-based training methods, to have a commitment to dog welfare in the business model, to prioritize dogs' emotional well-being, to have healthy and safe training environments, and to inform clients about the training methods that will be used.<sup>5</sup> The AnimalKind program goes beyond a knowledge assessment, requiring an audit that includes observation of facilities, equipment, and training methods.<sup>6</sup>

To assess this indicator, we looked at the number of dog training businesses in BC that are accredited by AnimalKind. At the end of 2023 we found that, of the approximately 240 dog training businesses in BC, 35 were accredited with AnimalKind.<sup>7</sup> The AnimalKind program provides credible information to British Columbians seeking humane dog training services. Dog trainers in BC should continue to embrace this program, and there is opportunity to develop similar accreditation programs in other provinces to provide this service to Canadians more widely.

Subsequent to our scan, a more detailed review of the websites of dog training businesses across the province was conducted and published in the academic literature.<sup>8</sup> This research identified 281 websites, of which 72% described using only reward-based training. While reviewing websites may not be as reliable as an accreditation program in determining whether trainers actually are employing reward-based training, it generally indicates a prevalence of the use of humane training in BC.

There is also growing interest among Canadian reward-based trainers in self-regulation and standardizing dog training methods. The Canadian Professional Dog Trainers (CAPDT) is working to develop a national curriculum for dog trainer education and set professional standards for humane training.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the mission of the Professional Animal Care and Training Association of BC (PACTA BC) includes to "Investigate whether regulation, or some form of licensing, would ensure humane treatment of animals and protect those who love and live with them."<sup>10</sup>

4 This section focuses specifically on dog trainers, although humane training principles (e.g., using rewards and avoiding punishment in training) should be applied in all animal training. While training and behaviour-modification services may be available for other companion animals, the focus here remains on dog training, as it is most common and there is well-developed research available on the topic.

5 The AnimalKind program defines humane training as "training or caring for an animal without using pain, fear, physical or verbal intimidation techniques" and reward-based training as "any training technique, tool or device that the dog does not perceive as physically or emotionally uncomfortable." See: BC SPCA. (2022). Dog Training Standards. <https://animalkind.ca/wp-content/uploads/AnimalKind-Dog-Training-Standards.pdf>

6 BC SPCA. *Get accredited for dog training*. <https://animalkind.ca/dog-training-and-care-services/accreditation-for-dog-trainers/>

7 The approximate total of 240 dog trainers in BC was determined via web search for dog training businesses in BC. AnimalKind trainer numbers are available online. See: BC SPCA. *Find Services*. <https://animalkind.ca/find-services/>

8 Cavalli, C., et al. (2025). Characteristics of dog training companies and their services in British Columbia, Canada. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 77, 30-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jveb.2024.12.002>

9 Prinold, H. (2025). Why did I become a CPDT-KA? CAPDT Forum, 1, 38-39. <https://capdt.ca/the-forum-special-issue/>

10 Professional Animal Care and Training Association of BC (PACTA BC) (n.d.). Mission Statement. Available at: <https://www.pactabc.ca/about>

In the meantime, the AnimalKind program provides a valuable system for identifying dog trainers that are qualified and committed to high-welfare practices. However, in BC communities where no accredited organizations are available, and throughout all other provinces and territories, individuals must navigate the options on their own. This can be a challenging task if one is not aware of what to look for in a trainer. The following quick reference guides, informed by the BC SPCA's AnimalKind program, can serve as a helpful resource to promote a high level of welfare in a dog's training experience. More detailed information can be found directly at their website: [AnimalKind.ca](https://animalkind.ca).

### Quick reference guides on what to look for in companion animal training\*

#### What humane training looks like

- Training with rewards like treats, food, and play.
- Trainers make training fun for you and your dog.
- Trainers let you watch or participate in training.
- Trainers explain dog behaviour and body language.
- Trainers keep class sizes small (4-6 dogs per trainer).
- Trainers are professional and treat your dog with respect.

#### What to avoid

- Use of punishment like shouting, pushing, hitting, or leash corrections.
- Use of shock, prong, or choke collars.
- Trainers who refuse to let you watch or participate.
- Trainers who refuse to use treats or food as rewards.
- Trainers who talk of "dominance" or "alphas."
- Trainers who give unqualified veterinary advice or diagnoses.
- Trainers who guarantee training results.
- Trainers who make you feel uncomfortable, or make your dog scared or unhappy.

\*Based on BC SPCA's guidance and resources "Humane dog training," available at: <https://animalkind.ca/dog-training-and-care-services/humane-dog-training/>



#### ENABLING CONDITION

*Labelling of the agricultural practices used to produce animal products allows consumers to make informed choices about humane options.*

## Indicator Rs<sub>2</sub>

### Meaningful animal welfare food labelling systems used in Canada

***Finding: There are four meaningful and reliable food labelling systems operating in Canada that have animal welfare criteria. Beyond these labels, there are unverified terms that may provide some information about animal welfare standards, and others that have a particularly high risk of being empty and misleading. More food products should carry clear, standardized, verifiable labels to support consumers in making humane food choices.***

While animals are being raised for food consumption, they should be provided with a good life and a humane death and always be treated with respect and compassion. Inflicting the least harm is paramount. Agricultural practices and settings should provide for all their needs, including opportunities for positive experiences, and allow them to express behaviours that promote their well-being.<sup>11</sup> Although minimum animal welfare standards of care exist in Canada,<sup>12</sup> in most of the country they are not legally binding, nor do they meet all the qualities described above. To ensure the standards are not just requirements on paper, it is critical that there is a process verifying that the standards are actually being applied on the farm. Site visits, ideally unannounced, by independent auditors or inspectors provide the strongest level of verification.

### What you can do

- If buying animal products, look for products with certified labels.
- Review the definitions of marketing terms in this section to help you make informed purchases.
- Ask your local grocery stores or restaurants to offer products that are certified under the labelling systems mentioned below.
- Ask decision-makers, such as your local MP, to ensure all animals in Canada are raised using the highest welfare practices.

<sup>11</sup> Humane Canada Position Statement on Farmed Animal Welfare and Humane Canada Position Statement on Humane Killing Including Euthanasia and Slaughter of Farmed Animals. See: Humane Canada. *Position statements*. <https://humaneCanada.ca/en/about-us/position-statements>

<sup>12</sup> In Canada, national standards exist in the form of the National Farm Animal Care Council's Codes of Practice for care and handling of farm animals. For more information, visit: <https://www.nfacc.ca/>



Until a humane agriculture system is achieved, people should be empowered to make informed choices about which production practices they are supporting with their purchases and to select more humane options. Food labelling can be an important tool for providing consumers with information about the products available to them. According to a 2023 representative survey, “Almost two thirds of Canadians (64%) say they are very likely or moderately likely to change their purchasing behaviour if a product is labelled humane.”<sup>13</sup> However, there can be distrust around what labels actually mean. In the same year, another study found that almost the same proportion of Canadians (62%) expressed concern about misleading food labels or descriptions.<sup>14</sup> This shows that verifying the truth in food labelling is an important driver in the shift toward more humane food production.

Different types of food labels and information about animal welfare may appear on animal products in Canada:

- Certified labels overseen by an external body (e.g., Certified Organic). These labels provide the most assurance of animal welfare claims and go beyond Canada’s minimum welfare standards in the National Farm Animal Care Council Codes of Practice.
- Terms defined as guidance in minimum welfare standards but not legally enforced, regulated, or verified (e.g., free-range, free-run).
- Undefined terms (e.g., animal-friendly, humanely raised). These terms provide the least clarity about animal welfare claims.

Though some of these labels are less reliable due to the lack of oversight, there can be challenges with all of them if it is unclear what they communicate to consumers. In this section, we explore various labels, including how to understand their credibility and what they communicate.






There are four certified labels that may appear on animal-based food products in Canada. These certifications require adherence to defined animal welfare standards that go beyond the minimum requirements, with verification processes to ensure the standards are being met. The labelling programs are listed in Table 1 with a brief overview of how they are managed and what they communicate.

<sup>13</sup> Research Co. (2023). *The Fur Bearers’ humane survey - 2023*. <https://thefurbearers.com/wp-content/uploads/Humane-Survey-Factum-28Feb2023.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> The total respondents included 33% who were very concerned, 29% who were concerned, 30% who were neutral, and 8% who were not concerned.

See: The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity. (2023). *2023 Public trust research report*. <https://www.foodintegrity.ca/public-trust-research-reports/>

**Table 1. Certified animal welfare labels in Canada**

LABEL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<p><b>ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED</b></p> 	<p>This program is operated by A Greener World. There are many requirements for living conditions, including that all animals must be raised on a pasture or range. Animals must be able to engage in natural behaviours to support their physical and mental well-being. The program has slaughter standards as well, including requirements for slaughter facilities regarding how they unload and handle animals, approved methods of stunning and slaughter, and staffing and training. Participating farms and slaughter facilities are audited at least once per year, including a site visit.<sup>15</sup></p>
<p><b>ANIMAL WELFARE CERTIFIED</b></p>  	<p>Operated by Global Animal Partnership, this program uses two different tiered labelling systems: one for land animals, and one for farmed salmon. A higher tier indicates that the animal's rearing environment is closer to their natural environment. While this allows varied levels of participation in the program, it can be more convoluted for consumers, as the standards vary with each tier. Standards at the top tier include many higher welfare requirements (e.g., requirements for outdoor access, environmental enrichment, restrictions on transport times and painful practices, such as ear notching and castration), though these are often insignificant or lacking among the lower tiers. Audits occur every 15 months for land animal certification and every 18 months for farmed salmon certification, and include a site visit.</p> <p>The slaughter requirements under this program are varied. For land animals, this program does not certify slaughter facilities. The only slaughter standard appears in the highest tier, requiring that animals be slaughtered on-farm, as this tier requires that the animals spend their entire life on the farm. The system for farmed salmon, however, requires certification of slaughter facilities at all tier levels. Slaughter standards include requirements regarding how salmon are handled, approved methods of stunning and slaughter, as well as staff training. Facilities are audited annually, including a site visit.<sup>16</sup></p>
<p><b>CERTIFIED HUMANE</b></p> 	<p>This program is operated by Humane Farm Animal Care. There are many requirements regarding living conditions, including bans on cages, crates, and tie stalls. Standards around living conditions are designed to allow animals to engage in natural behaviours to support their physical and psychological needs. The program has slaughter standards as well, with requirements regarding how slaughter facilities handle animals, approved methods of stunning and slaughter, staff training, and more. Participating farms and slaughter facilities are audited once per year, including a site visit that can be unannounced.<sup>17</sup></p>
<p><b>CERTIFIED ORGANIC</b></p> 	<p>This program is regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, a federal government agency. The standards of the program contain some animal welfare provisions, though this is not the main focus. Welfare provisions include prohibitions on certain types of cages and stalls, space requirements well beyond minimum industry requirements, prohibition of certain painful practices, and required outdoor access for all animals. There are also requirements regarding how animals are transported and housed, as well as adherence to approved stunning and slaughter practices. Certified producers and slaughter facilities must pass an annual inspection, which may be unannounced.<sup>18</sup></p>

In addition to the benefits to animals who experience higher welfare as a result of the farm following the certification requirements, the above programs also function to provide reliable information with easily identifiable labels to help consumers make informed decisions about the products they choose. Their standards and processes are publicly available through their websites. These labels provide the most significant, reliable, and transparent information about animal husbandry practices and animal welfare impacts for animal products on the Canadian market.

Certain terms that may appear on animal product labels are defined in national guidance documents that provide minimum welfare standards but lack any certification or verification process to ensure the terms are being used correctly (unless also verified under one of the labelling systems above). While having a definition provides an opportunity for transparency regarding the claim, this depends on members of the public and other stakeholders knowing the definitions and, above all, on industry applying the terms accurately. These terms are listed in Table 2.

15 For more information, visit: A Greener World. *Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW*. <https://agreenerworld.org/certifications/animal-welfare-approved/>

16 For more information, visit: Global Animal Partnership <https://globalanimalpartnership.org/>

17 For more information, visit: Certified Humane <https://certifiedhumane.org/>

18 Canadian General Standards Board. (2020). Organic production systems: General principles and management standards. [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2020/ongc-cgsb/P29-32-310-2020-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2020/ongc-cgsb/P29-32-310-2020-eng.pdf); Government of Canada.

*Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SOR/2018-108)* <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2018-108/index.html>

**Table 2. Defined but unverified terms that may appear on animal product labels**

TERM	MEANING
<b>FREE-RANGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When applied to birds raised for meat: “A system where birds are allowed access to an outdoor area when weather permits.”<sup>19</sup></li> <li>• When applied to birds raised for egg production: “A system where laying hens are allowed access to an outdoor pasture or range area.”<sup>20</sup></li> <li>• In federal government guidance to consumers: “Free-range claims refer to chickens having access to regularly roam and graze outdoors. There are no specific requirements, such as the length of time spent outdoors or the type of environment in order to use these claims.”<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>
<b>FREE-RUN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When applied to birds raised for meat: “A system where birds roam freely inside a barn but do not have outdoor access.”<sup>17</sup></li> <li>• When applied to birds raised for egg production: “A system where birds roam freely inside a barn but do not have access to the outdoors. Also referred to as barn systems.”<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>

Other terms that lack a legally enforceable definition are typically used to instill confidence in consumers by suggesting that a certain product was produced using practices that promote good animal welfare. However, their lack of clarity and verification put them at higher risk of being used in a misleading or dishonest fashion. These terms are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Undefined and unverified terms that may appear on animal product labels**

TERM	MEANING
<b>CAGE-FREE</b>	This term lacks a descriptive definition in Canada. Rather, cage-free conditions are better defined using other terms (e.g., Free-range and Free-run). The term “cage-free” provides less information about chickens’ housing conditions than the terms in Table 2.
<b>GENERAL TERMS</b>	<p>These terms are not defined or verified, making it impossible to know what exactly is being claimed about the animal’s conditions or whether the claim is true. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal care certified</li> <li>• Animal friendly</li> <li>• Ethically raised</li> <li>• Free raised</li> <li>• High welfare</li> <li>• Humane</li> <li>• Humane environment</li> <li>• Humanely raised/handled/treated</li> <li>• Naturally raised</li> <li>• Pasture raised</li> <li>• Raised humanely</li> <li>• Raised with care</li> <li>• Responsibly raised</li> <li>• Socially raised</li> <li>• Stress-free environment</li> <li>• Thoughtfully raised</li> <li>• Verified humanely raised</li> </ul>

Undefined, unverified terms can be misleading, making empty claims that provide limited or no information at all about how the animals actually were raised. The best and most reliable labels are those provided by the certification programs listed in Table 1. The more reliable the information on the product label, the more assured consumers can be that their purchases are supporting the higher welfare conditions being advertised.

19 Canadian Hatching Egg Producers, Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and the National Farm Animal Care Council. (2016). *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Hatching Eggs, Breeders, Chicken and Turkeys*. <https://www.nfacc.ca/poultry-code-of-practice>

20 Egg Farmers of Canada and the National Farm Animal Care Council. (2017). *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens*. <https://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/pullets-and-laying-hens>

21 Canadian Food Inspection Agency. *Understanding a food label*. <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-labels/labelling/consumers/understanding-food-label>



#### ENABLING CONDITION:

*Individuals scale back on their consumption of animal products in order to improve planetary health and reduce the impact of climate change on humans and other species, while allowing the agriculture system to evolve away from industrial farming, implementing the best practices in animal welfare.*

## Indicator Rs<sub>3</sub>

### Declining per capita meat consumption

***Finding: Per capita meat consumption in Canada has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years. To support positive impacts on animal welfare, climate change, biodiversity, and human health and safety, it is important for meat consumption to decrease.***

Current levels of meat consumption are possible because of intensive systems of agriculture in which animals are reared under conditions that raise serious concerns about their welfare. In addition, intensive animal agriculture has far-reaching impacts on the environment (including the climate, pollution, and biodiversity crises) and poses health risks, including the development of pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, and chronic human disease. To understand these impacts, it is helpful to look at the issue through a One Health / One Welfare lens that considers the profound interconnectedness among all life on Earth and the environments that support our survival.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> One of Humane Canada's six values is *One Health / One Welfare*: "Humane Canada recognizes that the health and welfare of animals are inextricably linked to human health, well-being and environmental integrity. We embrace a One Health / One Welfare approach that considers the essential interconnectedness among these domains and relies on cooperation and partnership across disciplines." One Health / One Welfare seeks solutions that are holistic, humane, just, and sustainable.

## What you can do

- Reduce your meat consumption: cut back on the meat in your meals or go meatless every now and then.
- Explore plant-based variations of your favourite dishes.
- Challenge yourself to go meatless or fully vegan for certain meals or days of the week.
- Have fun exploring new recipes and cuisines, and enjoy the benefits for you, animals, and the planet.

The current prevailing system of intensive agriculture results in countless animals experiencing poor welfare states through (among other issues) their confinement, overcrowded conditions, and barren environments that do not meet their physical, behavioural, and social needs.<sup>23</sup>

Among environmental issues, intensive animal agriculture has significant impacts on climate, with the production of food from animals resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions than plant-based foods, regardless of whether measurements are by weight, energy value, or protein content produced.<sup>24</sup> In 2020, about 57% of all agricultural emissions came from the production of red meat and dairy.<sup>25</sup> Emissions from food systems are so extensive that, even if fossil fuel emissions were immediately eliminated, the international targets for limiting global warming would be difficult or even impossible to achieve, due particularly to the production of animal products.<sup>26</sup>

Intensive animal agriculture also poses public and ecological health risks, a few critical examples of which are provided here. Firstly, of total antibiotic use globally, most is for animal production where these medicines have been historically used non-therapeutically for growth promotion. This routine overuse of antibiotics has been identified as a major cause of the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, with implications not only in farm settings, but also in hospitals and human communities.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, there has been an upward trend in the appearance of new pathogens largely due to deforestation, with 75% of global deforestation being driven by agriculture and 41% of deforestation attributed to beef production alone.<sup>28</sup> Thirdly, deforestation also destroys ecosystems which leads to suffering and death for many species of wildlife and contributes to biodiversity loss which, in turn, threatens larger ecosystem balances, including those that humans and the planet as a whole depend on. Rates of biodiversity loss have been unprecedented in recent history, with a 69% reduction in wildlife populations from 1970 to 2018.<sup>29</sup> The global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss.<sup>30</sup> As these concerning examples illustrate, in addition to the serious welfare concerns for farmed animals, the current state of intensive animal agriculture threatens human health and the ecological integrity on which all life on Earth depends.

Addressing this existential threat and the widespread environmental, human, and animal welfare issues depends in large part on reducing the scale and intensiveness of animal agriculture — in other words, transitioning away from an animal agriculture system whose goal is to maximize production through overexploitation of animals, nature and marginalized humans, toward one that is more ethical, healthy, and sustainable. A decrease in animal production both requires and could be driven by a reduction in consumption together with the demand for higher welfare, environmentally sustainable products. Cutting back at the individual level is especially important given the growth of the human population. Diets that are less heavily meat-based are well recognized to be healthier for the individual<sup>31</sup> and are supported by Canada's Dietary Guidelines and Dietitians of Canada.<sup>32</sup>

23 Nordquist, R.E., et al. (2017). Mutilating procedures, management practices, and housing conditions that may affect the welfare of farm animals: Implications for welfare research. *Animals* 7(2) 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390%2Fani7020012>

24 Feigin, S.V., et al. (2023). Proposed solutions to anthropogenic climate change: A systematic literature review and a new way forward. *Heliyon* 9 (1821) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20544>; Godfray, H.C.J., et al. (2018). Meat consumption, health, and the environment. *Science* 361 (6399) eam 5324. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aam5324>; Ritchie, H., et al (2022). Environmental impacts of food production. *Our World in Data* <https://ourworldindata.org/environmental-impacts-of-food?insight=meat-dairy-food-carbon-footprint#key-insights-on-the-environmental-impacts-of-food>

25 Romanello, M., et al. (2023). The 2023 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: the imperative for a health-centred response in a world facing irreversible harms. *Lancet* 402 (10419) p. 2371. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)01859-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)01859-7)

26 Clark, M.A., et al. (2020). Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets. *Science* 370 (no. 6517), 705-708. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba7357>

27 Van Boeckel, T.P., et al. (2019). Global trends in antimicrobial resistance in animals in low- and middle-income countries. *Science* 365 (6459).

<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw1944>; Talebi Bezmim Abadi, A., et al. (2019). World Health Organization report: Current crisis of antibiotic resistance. *BioNanoScience* 9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12668-019-00658-4>

28 Macken, D. (2023). Pandemic risk on the rise, thanks to how we eat. *Sentient Health*. <https://sentientmedia.org/meat-and-pandemic-risk/>; Ritchie, H. (2021). Cutting down forests: what are the drivers of deforestation? *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/what-are-drivers-deforestation>

29 World Wildlife Fund. (2022). *Living planet report 2022: Building a nature-positive society*. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. & Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland. [https://wwfpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr\\_2022\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://wwfpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf)

30 Benton, T. G., et al. (2021). *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss*. Chatham House. London. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss>

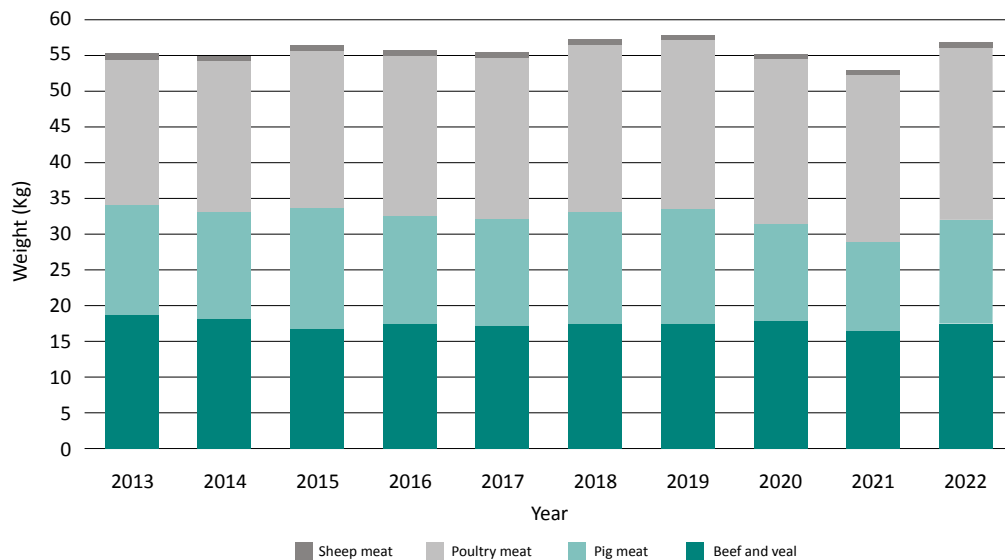
31 Health benefits relate to overweight, obesity, and the most important non-communicable diseases, i.e., cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. See: Willett W., et al. (2019). Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. *Lancet* 393(10170), 447–92. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31788-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31788-4)

32 Health Canada. (2019). *Canada's dietary guidelines* <https://food-guide.canada.ca/sites/default/files/artifact-pdf/CDG-EN-2018.pdf>; Dietitians of Canada. (2023).

*What are the benefits of eating more plant-based foods?* <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Cooking-And-Food/Vegetables-and-Fruit/Benefits-of-Eating-Plant-Based>

One way to measure Canadian efforts in this area is to look at the average per capita meat consumption. While some national surveys show consumers have been reporting significant decreases in their own meat consumption,<sup>33</sup> looking at actual measures of the meat supply may provide a more accurate picture at the national level. The chart below, based on national agricultural data collected by the OECD, shows how much meat the average Canadian consumed annually over the last ten years the data has been available.<sup>34</sup>

### Average per capita meat consumption in Canada



\* Data from OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2023-2032.

Per capita meat consumption in Canada remained fairly consistent with a slight upward trend between 2013 and 2019. In 2020 and 2021, the downward trend can be attributed to pandemic effects that both disrupted supply chains and decreased individual demand for meat.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, in 2022, we see a return to pre-pandemic levels of meat consumption, slightly above 55kg per person.

No form of agricultural production has zero impact on the planet and the beings that live here, but reducing meat consumption in favour of more plant-based foods offers important benefits for people, the Earth, and all who call this planet home. As a result, there is also an increasing availability of plant-based meat substitutes to facilitate this transition.

33 In 2023, 37% of Canadians surveyed said the amount of meat they ate decreased over the past year, compared to 32% and 27% who reported this in 2020 and 2019, respectively. See: The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity. (2023). *2023 Public trust research report*. <https://www.foodintegrity.ca/public-trust-research-reports/>

34 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collect data from national statistical sources to gather this information: See OECD, FAO. (2023). *OECD-FAO Agricultural outlook 2023-2032*. [https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?pg=0&bp=true&snb=85&tm=agricultural&df\[ds\]=ds-DisseminateFinalDMZ&df\[id\]=DSD\\_AGR%40DF\\_OUTLOOK\\_2023\\_2032&df\[ag\]=OECD.TAD.ATM&df\[vs\]=1.0&hc\[Topic\]=Agriculture&pd=2013%2C2022&dq=CAN.A.CPC\\_EX\\_SH%2BCPC\\_EX\\_PT%2BCPC\\_EX\\_PK%2BCPC\\_EX\\_BV.FO\\_PC.KG\\_PS.&ly\[cl\]=TIME\\_PERIOD&ly\[rs\]=COMMODITY&to\[TIME\\_PERIOD\]=false](https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?pg=0&bp=true&snb=85&tm=agricultural&df[ds]=ds-DisseminateFinalDMZ&df[id]=DSD_AGR%40DF_OUTLOOK_2023_2032&df[ag]=OECD.TAD.ATM&df[vs]=1.0&hc[Topic]=Agriculture&pd=2013%2C2022&dq=CAN.A.CPC_EX_SH%2BCPC_EX_PT%2BCPC_EX_PK%2BCPC_EX_BV.FO_PC.KG_PS.&ly[cl]=TIME_PERIOD&ly[rs]=COMMODITY&to[TIME_PERIOD]=false)

35 Bloomberg News. (2020, July 6). *Pandemic to spark biggest retreat for meat eating in decades*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-07/pandemic-set-to-spark-biggest-retreat-for-meat-eating-in-decades>



Leading international thinkers and organizations are advocating for a reform of food systems.<sup>36</sup> International efforts in this area include an action plan for plant-based foods enacted in Denmark, and the European Parliament calling for action to increase production and consumption of plant-based protein across the European Union.<sup>37</sup> To reduce your own consumption of meat and other animal products, please consider the tips in the box at the top of this section.

36 Kozicka, M., et al. (2023). Feeding climate and biodiversity goals with novel plant-based meat and milk alternatives. *Nature Communications* 14 (5316) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-40899-2>; Verkuijl, C., et al. (2023). A just transition in animal agriculture is necessary for more effective and equitable One Health outcomes. *CABI One Health* 2 (1) <https://doi.org/10.1079/cabionehealth.2023.0021>; World Federation for Animals. (2023). *Unveiling the Nexus: The interdependence of animal welfare, environment & sustainable development*. <https://wfa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Unveiling-the-Nexus-The-Interdependence-of-Animal-Welfare-Environment-Sustainable-Development.pdf>; UN Environment Programme (2021). *Our global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss*. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/our-global-food-system-primary-driver-biodiversity-loss>; Benton, T. G., et al. (2021). *Food system impacts on biodiversity loss*. Chatham House. London. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/02/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss>; BC SPCA. *Plant-based eating*. <https://spca.bc.ca/news/plant-based-eating/>

37 Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark. (2023). Danish action plan for plant-based foods. <https://fvm.dk/foedevarer/handlingsplan-for-plantebaserede-foedevarer>; European Parliament. (2023). *European protein strategy*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0375\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0375_EN.pdf)



**ENABLING CONDITION:**

*Companies have policies regarding the humane treatment of animals within their supply chains or in other areas of their business that impact animals, and report on them in a timely way.*

## Indicator Rs<sub>4</sub>

### Top corporations in Canada reference animal welfare in their policies

***Finding: Policies that reference animal welfare are scarce among top Canadian corporations. Out of the 27 whose policies were reviewed, only 5 reference animal welfare or related concepts, and even fewer report on their actions. More Canadian corporations should set animal welfare commitments in corporate policies and report on their progress in order to demonstrate corporate social responsibility and support informed decision making by consumers and investors.***

Corporate policies serve as a tool for communicating a company's priorities, values, and commitments. Reporting on how well they are achieving goals and commitments set out in their policies in addition to progress or challenges they experience demonstrates transparency and accountability. These elements support consumers and investors in making informed decisions about which companies and practices they wish to support.

## What you can do

- Review our findings below about how top Canadian companies address animal welfare.
- Look on company websites to review their policies and reports before making purchasing or investing decisions.
- Ask companies that you're interested in to show their commitment to animal welfare by developing corporate policies and reporting on their progress or impact.

Through this indicator, we explore how Canadian companies are setting and communicating about policies related to animal welfare. We reviewed nine sectors that commonly have either direct interaction with animals, or indirect interaction, such as through environmental impacts. Within each sector, we selected the three largest public companies, as measured by market value, and looked specifically at their corporate policies.<sup>38</sup> Our findings are summarized immediately below, followed by a sector-specific overview.

Total number of companies reviewed	Number of companies with descriptive policies that go beyond minimum legal requirements <sup>39</sup>	Number of companies that merely recognized a topic without going beyond minimum legal requirements	Number of companies that had no relevant policies
<b>27</b>	<b>5 (18.5%)</b>	<b>4 (15%)</b>	<b>18 (66.5%)</b>

**Apparel (Manufacturing & Retail):** Two of the three companies reviewed contained no relevant policies. The third company, Aritzia Inc., had an “Animal Materials Sourcing Policy” with defined terms, prohibited animal-derived materials, and restrictions on how permitted animal-derived materials are to be sourced.<sup>40</sup> They also provide information on the types and amounts of animal-derived materials used in their environment, social, and governance (ESG) report.<sup>41</sup>

**Entertainment:** No relevant policies were present among the three entertainment companies reviewed, expressing no commitment to animal welfare beyond minimum legal requirements.

**Food Producers:** One company had no relevant policies, and another had an “animal welfare” section in their Supplier Code of Conduct which stated an expectation for suppliers to engage in sound animal husbandry practices while providing no measurable or actionable commitments. The other company in this category, Saputo Inc., had an “Animal Welfare Policy” with content such as welfare requirements for their producers and suppliers and a protocol for suspending business operations with producers or suppliers in cases where there is evidence of animal cruelty.<sup>42</sup> They provide some high-level tracking and reporting on this policy in their Saputo Promise Report.<sup>43</sup>

**Grocery Stores:** One company had no relevant policies, and the other two had “animal welfare” sections in their Supplier Code of Conduct that stated an expectation for suppliers to engage in sound animal husbandry practices while providing no measurable or actionable commitments.

**Healthcare:** Two companies had no relevant policies. The other company, Bausch Health Companies Inc., had an “Animal Testing Policy” expressing a commitment to limit the use of animals in research, prioritize non-animal methods and use the minimum number of required animals when animal testing occurs.<sup>44</sup> However, they provide no reporting of data on their use of animals and non-animal methods.

38 The market values of companies were obtained from Disfold, a company that compiles and releases public financial market information, and are current to July 1, 2023. The focus is on public companies and excludes private companies based on relevance for investors and a tendency for private companies to refrain from sharing their corporate policies. We chose the three largest companies from each sector to balance looking at the companies with the largest market share for each sector while maintaining feasible limits on the amount of information to be collected and reported.

39 Minimum legal requirements refer to any animal or environmental protection legislation that companies or their suppliers must abide by in the regions in which they operate; these may vary widely.

40 Aritzia. (2022). *Animal materials sourcing policy*. <https://www.aritzia.com/en/aritzia/corporate-hub/community/resources.html>

41 Aritzia. *Aritzia community ESG report*. [https://www.aritzia.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-Aritzia\\_Shared/default/dw570e4e22/aritzia/corporate\\_responsibility/ARITZIA\\_COMMUNITY\\_ESG\\_REPORT\\_FY\\_2023\\_new.pdf](https://www.aritzia.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-Aritzia_Shared/default/dw570e4e22/aritzia/corporate_responsibility/ARITZIA_COMMUNITY_ESG_REPORT_FY_2023_new.pdf)

42 Saputo. (2024). *Animal welfare policy*. <https://www.saputo.com/en/our-promise/reference-documents>

43 Saputo. (2024). *2024 Saputo promise report*. <https://www.saputo.com/en/our-promise/reference-documents>

44 Bausch Health. (2022). *Clinical trials policy*. <https://www.bauschhealth.com/siteassets/pdf/clinical-trials-policy-11.11.2022.pdf>

**Restaurants:** No relevant policies were present among the three restaurant companies reviewed, expressing no commitment to animal welfare beyond minimum legal requirements.

**Basic Materials:** This sector consists of companies engaged in discovering, developing, or processing raw materials (e.g., oil, timber, mining). Two companies had no relevant policies. The other company, Barrick Gold Corporation, had a “Biodiversity Policy” with a list of commitments and actions they will take to achieve those commitments.<sup>45</sup> They also report much information in their annual Sustainability Report, including achieved milestones, future targets, efforts to protect biodiversity, and a sustainability “scorecard” that compares the company to their previous performance and the performance of other companies in the sector.<sup>46</sup>

**Energy:** Two companies had no relevant policies, and the other had a “Sustainability Policy” expressing a commitment to minimize impacts on wildlife and biodiversity while providing no measurable or actionable commitments.

**Technology:** Two companies had no relevant policies. The other company, CGI Inc., identifies a commitment to minimize their impact on biodiversity in their “ESG Policy” that lists targets and actions to support their achievement.<sup>47</sup> Updates on progress toward achieving their targets are provided in the company’s ESG Report.<sup>48</sup>

Corporate commitments grounded in policy and accompanied by measurement and public reporting on how those commitments are (or are not) being achieved can inform consumers and investors about a company’s priorities and values, and whether they include animal welfare. Four companies identified in the list above are setting a strong example in their commitment to animal welfare and corporate transparency. While there may be opportunities for further policy development or for reporting to contain more in-depth information, these companies provide models of how corporate policies can communicate strong commitments to animal welfare and how public reporting can be used to demonstrate accountability. Responsible consumers and investors are encouraged to contemplate the impact of their purchasing and investment actions and use these tools to make better choices for animals.

45 Barrick. *Biodiversity policy*. [https://s25.q4cdn.com/322814910/files/doc\\_downloads/gov\\_docs/policies/Barrick-Biodiversity-Policy.pdf](https://s25.q4cdn.com/322814910/files/doc_downloads/gov_docs/policies/Barrick-Biodiversity-Policy.pdf)

46 Barrick. *Sustainability report 2022* [https://s25.q4cdn.com/322814910/files/doc\\_downloads/sustainability/Barrick\\_Sustainability\\_Report\\_2022.pdf](https://s25.q4cdn.com/322814910/files/doc_downloads/sustainability/Barrick_Sustainability_Report_2022.pdf)

47 CGI. (2024). *Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policy*. <https://www.cgi.com/sites/default/files/2024-05/cgi-esg-policy.pdf>

48 CGI. (2023). *Building a more sustainable and inclusive world: 2022 Environmental, Social and Governance Report*.

<https://www.cgi.com/sites/default/files/2023-03/cgi-2022-esg-report.pdf>



## **About Humane Canada**

Humane Canada is the federation of Humane Societies and SPCAs. As Canada's voice for animal welfare, we drive positive progressive change to end animal cruelty, improve animal protection, and promote the humane treatment of all animals. Humane Canada convenes and represents the largest animal welfare community in the country. Together with our Members and Associates in every province and two territories, we advance the welfare of animals with a strong national voice, promoting animal welfare interests and concerns to government, policymakers, industry, and the public.

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