



CQA to include Animal Care Assessment



Effective January 1, 2012, completion of the Animal Care Assessment (ACA™) requirements will become an integral component of the Canadian Quality Assurance program or CQA®. This means that as of the first of the year, producers will need to meet the requirements of the ACA to maintain their CQA status.

Background

In 2005, the Animal Care Assessment program was launched as an independent, voluntary assessment tool for producers to promote and demonstrate responsible pork production that is validated by an outside party. The program is a way for you to 'say what you do, do what you say and prove it.'

The ACA provides a step-by-step guide for producers to complete a welfare assessment for their farms that can then be used to monitor, manage and document animal husbandry practices.

Just as the program was being introduced, the pork industry suffered a severe financial setback. Since then, several crises have stressed the industry, making a full launch of the ACA untimely and ill-advised.

Now, after several years, industry forecasts are brighter and it's time to move forward with promoting the uptake of the ACA. Since its inception, the ACA was always destined to become part of the overall CQA program.

While the Canadian Quality Assurance program was designed to address food safety protocols, the ACA focuses on animal care practices. The program, developed by a team of experts (including producers, producer organization representatives, animal care researchers and government

officials), is administered by the Canadian Pork Council and delivered by provincial CQA delivery agents.

Timing is everything

The timing is right to move the ACA into the CQA for a number of other reasons. Canadian consumers want to know that pork farmers are responsible stewards of the animals in their care.

Consumer pressure around animal welfare around the globe is increasing and the processing and retail sectors know it. In October 2010, the Canadian Meat Council (CMC) wrote to the Canadian Pork Council expressing their support for the Animal Care Assessment.

In their letter, the CMC stated "As hog processors, it is important that a thorough and auditable animal welfare tool such as the Animal Care Assessment program be used widely in the industry to ensure that all animals are treated in a humane manner" . . . "We hope to see all Canadian hog producers move towards the adoption of the Animal Care Assessment tool on their farms."

In February, 2011, Maple Leaf Consumer Foods echoed that sentiment in a media interview. John Carney, the vice-president of live procurement and industry relations with Maple Leaf said the difficult economic situation

over the past several years has made it difficult for producers to focus on a program like ACA. But now that the industry is past some of that difficulty, hopefully producers will see the ACA as a key part of sustaining the industry.

We see this program, ACA, as another piece in conveying the message of the good practices that are followed on farm, in transportation and in our plants.

We have a great story to tell about the way we care for our animals. In my experience, nobody cares more about their animals than our producers and that's a story that needs to be told.

I think by having a national platform such as ACA, we will speak with a unified strong voice and be able to articulate the good practices that we've been doing for years. It's nothing new, it just gives us a better way to express what we've always been doing."

Colette Schick
600 Sow Farrow-to-Finish Manager
Big Sky Farms, SK

"The ACA is not a difficult process since barn managers and staff are already familiar with CQA. The ACA provides focus, starts conversations and raises awareness about animal welfare. It has caused us to look at everything from facility maintenance to weekly water nipple checks."



What do producers need to do to maintain their CQA status?

After January 1, 2012, producers will need to submit completed ACA documentation to their CQA provincial delivery agent as part of their CQA renewal.

Producers already on the program have found it easy to complete. Production practices currently used on most Canadian hog farms already comply with the guidelines in the ACA.

To become familiar with the requirements of the ACA, the Canadian Pork Council encourages producers to get started early by completing a self-declaration before the end of 2011.

For all farms, self-declarations done this year will suffice until their 2012 regular CQA validation. At that point, producers will complete the ACA documentation as part of their CQA renewal process.

The CQA and ACA renewal and validation process will be fully integrated. When validators are scheduled to complete a three-year on-farm validation for CQA, they will complete the ACA validation simultaneously. Farms that are scheduled for a full CQA validation in 2012 will also be subject to a full validation of their ACA. Farms that are scheduled for a partial CQA validation in 2012 will be able to use the self-declaration again to demonstrate compliance with ACA.

Both the ACA manual and the self-declaration forms are available at www.cqa-aqc.ca/aca.



Staying CQA Proud

In 2011

1. Complete the ACA Manual. (Available by download or from your CQA delivery agent)
2. Complete the self-declaration. (Available by download or from your CQA delivery agent)
3. Send the self-declaration to your provincial CQA delivery agent or send along with your regular 2011 CQA validation documentation.

In 2012

- A. If your farm is scheduled for a full CQA validation, complete the ACA manual prior to your scheduled validation. Provide the complete documentation to your CQA validator upon visit.

– Or –

- B. If your farm is scheduled for a partial CQA validation, complete the ACA self-declaration and submit it along with your CQA documentation to your validator

Harry Koelen H-L Farms Paisley, ON

Koelen credits the ACA program for creating discussion and additional animal care tips for his employees to consider. And his employees aren't just talking about it, they're doing it. Koelen has an ACA representative in each of his barns now monitoring and maintaining the program guidelines. "It's very simple," says Koelen. "Everyone should be using the ACA program."

Richard Taillefer HiLife Farm Manitoba

The ACA has only been implemented at HiLife Farms for a few years, but Taillefer has seen a difference. Employees were already taking good care of the animals, but the ACA helps fine tune their practices.

Taillefer credits the ACA program for creating notable changes in his employees approach to animal care. "The program stirs up conversation, and 95% of it is positive," says Taillefer. The ACA program has even been incorporated into HiLife Farms employee training.