Draft bison Code of Practice released for public comment

(Lacombe, AB) 21 November 2016 – The Canadian Bison Association and the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) are pleased to announce the launch of the public comment period on the draft Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Bison. The public comment period allows stakeholders – bison producers, consumers and others with an interest in the welfare of bison - to view the draft Code and provide input to the final Code.

The draft Code and the public comment system are now accessible at: www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/bison. All comments must be submitted through the online system. The public comment period closes on January 19, 2017. The Code Development Committee will consider the submitted comments after the close of the comment period and the plan is that the final bison Code of Practice will be released by spring 2017.

Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals are the result of a unique consensus-based, multi-stakeholder approach used across various agricultural sectors, which brings together all relevant stakeholders with responsibility for animal care standards.

A Scientific Committee report summarizing research conclusions on priority welfare topics for bison can be found online alongside the draft Code. This peer-reviewed report aided the discussions of the Code Development Committee as it prepared the draft Code of Practice. The report, developed by scientists familiar with bison welfare, should be reviewed prior to making a submission.

“The Code Development Committee has worked hard since 2014 developing the draft Code. The public comment period will allow us to check our work with a broader representative group,” said Mark Silzer, bison producer and Chairman of the bison Code Development Committee. “I encourage bison producers to weigh in with their input as the Code will be an important tool for communicating how bison are raised in Canada,” he added.

Once finalized, the revised Code will promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, care, transportation, and other animal husbandry practices. The Canadian Bison Association initiated the Code review process in December 2014, utilizing NFACC’s Code development process.

“The Code development process helps diverse communities work together to improve the lives of farmed animals,” said Kaley Pugh, who represents the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies on the Code Committee. “We hope to receive broad input from the general public, industry and other stakeholders to ensure this Code improves animal welfare and reflects the values of Canadians.”

The bison Code revision is led by an 11-person Code Development Committee that includes participants from across
Canada including producers, animal welfare and enforcement representatives, researchers, veterinarians and government representatives. More information on the Code development process is available at www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice.

The bison Code is one of five Codes of Practice being developed as part of a multi-year NFACC project. Codes of Practice serve as our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices. It is important that Codes be scientifically informed, implementable by producers, and reflect societal expectations for responsible farm animal care. The Codes cover housing, feed and water, handling, euthanasia, transport and other important management practices.

Funding for this project has been provided through the AgriMarketing Program under Growing Forward 2, a federal–provincial–territorial initiative.

About the National Farm Animal Care Council
NFACC is a collaborative partnership of diverse stakeholders that work together on farm animal care and welfare. It supports robust processes to draft or renew Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals. NFACC would like to acknowledge the Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC) for their role in securing funding for this project. For more information on NFACC visit www.nfacc.ca.

About the Canadian Bison Association
The Canadian Bison Association is a national organization with 500 members that represents the interests of the bison industry on issues including international trade, animal health, nutrition, marketing, bison grading, bison conservation, animal welfare and other issues that have an impact on the industry

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