



## COVID-19 response by the Turkey Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic is concerning for consumers, food distributors, processing plant employees, and so many others, including farmers. This issue of the Plume newsletter has updates and information on work Turkey Farmers of Canada (TFC) is continuing to undertake in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TFC is working closely with the provincial marketing boards, processing sector representatives, industry stakeholders and government to maintain the supply chain operations, as best as possible during this time, without compromising implementation of measures for human health. The TFC staff and Board of Directors are working remotely to meet the unique challenges faced during this pandemic. TFC is communicating with government and industry to identify any potential areas where the food supply chain needs support at this time.

Provincially, turkey boards are in regular communication with farmers and processors on COVID-19 guidelines, and on animal welfare and food safety standards. TFC is working with provincial boards to get regular feedback on any potential issues farmers are experiencing.

### COVID-19 resources:

For further COVID-19 related updates, please see the [TFC website](#), the [TFC members' portal](#) and the [TFC On-Farms Programs portal](#).

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# TFC 261<sup>st</sup> Business Meeting and Annual General Meeting Notes

The TFC 261<sup>st</sup> General Meeting and the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting were held by video conference on March 25-26, 2020.

The most pressing issue Directors deliberated on was the 2020/2021 control period allocation – nationally and provincially. As highlighted in previous editions of the Plume, and at provincial board annual meetings (the ones held before COVID-19 cancellations), the demand for turkey meat has been under pressure with lagging supply, so a significant reduction in 2020/2021 allocation was needed. These discussions did not lead to a Board decision during the March meeting, so subsequent discussions and meetings were held.

On April 13, 2020 on a video conference of the Board, it was agreed that the allocation be set at 136 million kilograms for the 2020/2021 control period, a reduction of seven (7) percent from 2019/2020. The provincial allocations were also made for all elements of the quota system. This allocation created an amendment to the Quota Regulation for the period. At the time of writing, the submission to the Farm Products Council of Canada is has been approved.

Elections held following the AGM returned the TFC Executive Committee for another year: Chair Darren Ference (AB); Vice-Chair Calvin McBain (QC); and, Executive Committee member Brian Ricker (ON). In one other election, Steven Eadie (NS) was acclaimed the TFC Director to Canadian Poultry Research Council (CPRC).

## Executive Committee 2020/2021



Darren Ference  
**Chair**



Calvin McBain  
**Vice-Chair**



Brian Ricker  
**Executive Member**

# Market Insights

News articles reporting on the impact of COVID-19 in North America started as a trickle in late February. Since then, the speed with which things have happened, the flood of news coverage and the uncharted territory that we find ourselves in, make it difficult to predict the future. Volumes will be written about this period of human history, but from an agricultural protein market standpoint, here are four factors affecting our sector:

- **North American meat exports have been hampered**, leading to abundant supplies in cold storage. In February and March, it has noted that packers who were counting on increased exports due to easing trade tensions between the US and China, and shortages of pork due to African Swine Fever, instead saw decreased shipments to countries like China, South Korea and the Philippines.
- **Corn and feed grains are a lot cheaper.** Oil prices began to plummet on Monday, March 9 with West Texas Intermediate dropping from a close of \$41 the previous trading day to \$31 and corn has followed suit. With lower demand for gasoline, there is lower demand for ethanol and therefore lower demand for corn. The April corn contract has dropped from \$3.85/bushel on March 4 to as low as \$3.32 on March 15. As demand for gasoline and ethanol, and the price of oil are not likely to see a recovery for some time, this will continue to weigh on the price of corn and feed grains.<sup>1</sup>
- **Sales by and to foodservice operators are down sharply.** Due to social distancing, and a collapse in business travel and tourism, table service and eat-in dining has been curtailed and/or suspended in many restaurants. Many foodservice operators that continue to operate are limited to providing take-out and/or home delivery services. Of those that continue to operate, many have been forced to shorten or simplify their menus.
- **Stockpiling by consumers created a boom in demand for meat at retail.**<sup>2</sup> In early March, reports started to appear about panic buying. While toilet paper grabbed most of the headlines, meat sales also jumped considerably. On the week ended March 15, US retail meat department sales, excluding deli, were up 77% from year earlier. In comparison to the comparable week in 2019, turkey sales nearly doubled, with an increase of 96%. Beef and chicken which are by far the largest categories in the meat department saw increases of 73% and 76.5% respectively. Ground beef, which makes up more than 40% of the beef category saw sales for the week nearly double.<sup>3</sup>

**NOTE:** At the time of writing, the TFC does not have the retail sales data that will shed light on the impact of the pantry stocking that occurred in March. We expect to have data for the period of March 1 to March 28 in the middle of April. We will report this data to our members at that time.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are far-reaching and profound. While this report covered a sliver of those impacts, as data becomes available, TFC staff is committed to communicating these impacts to our producers and partners.

1. <https://www.meatingplace.com/Industry/News/Details/90745>
2. <https://www.meatingplace.com/Industry/News/Details/90755>
3. <https://www.meatingplace.com/Industry/News/Details/91102>

# National Marketing Campaign

## Partnerships

Canadian Turkey is pleased to continue with our partnership with HelloFresh and Chefs Plate. Every turkey menu kit item that is ordered across Canada continues to be identified with our Canadian Turkey/Canadian Raised Turkey™ brand.



## Think Turkey™

The national marketing campaign continues with changes appropriate to our current circumstances, reminding families to Think Turkey™ for family-friendly everyday meals.

The national six-week TV campaign premiered the week of April 6 with a new commercial on major English and French conventional and speciality networks. This TV campaign will also be featured again two weeks prior to Thanksgiving 2020.

At this point, the Out of Home campaign featuring billboards, transit murals and posters will launch in 10 key cities across Canada.

Think Turkey™ and Pensez Dindon™ are featured in cooking shows Wall of Chefs and Les Chefs. Wall of Chefs aired on February 3 for 10 weeks with a featured turkey segment on March 2. Les Chefs will be airing April 13 for nine weeks, with a featured turkey segment planned to air on April 27.



## Tasty. Nutritious. Versatile.

Recipes can be found at [canadianturkey.ca/featured-recipes](https://canadianturkey.ca/featured-recipes) and provincial extensions.

Recipe videos can be found at [canadianturkey.ca/videos](https://canadianturkey.ca/videos).

Nutrition information is available at [canadianturkey.ca/nutrition](https://canadianturkey.ca/nutrition).

Sign up for Canadian Turkey's **Get Cooking with Canadian Turkey™** monthly e-Newsletter at [canadianturkey.ca/e-newsletter](https://canadianturkey.ca/e-newsletter).

# Trade Update

## World Trade Organization (WTO)

On March 20, 2020, the WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo informed member countries that the twelfth WTO ministerial conference (MC12) scheduled for June in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, “will not be feasible” due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The WTO is exploring other possible options, from rescheduling to a virtual meeting.

With respect to the status of the agricultural negotiations, Ambassador Deep Ford (Guyana), circulated his revised report on the “doable elements” on February 24, 2020. The report identified elements and options for a possible outcome on agriculture at the MC12, in the negotiating areas of Domestic Support (DS), Market Access (MA), Export Competition (EC), Export Prohibitions and Restrictions (ER), Cotton, Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) and Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes (PSH).

When MC12 is held, the negotiating areas that are important to supply management will include: tariff simplification (the practice of expressing tariffs on agricultural products in a manner more complicated than as a percentage of the price); and, “sequencing” (the framework and principles to guide the negotiations going forward), which could include negotiations on tariff reductions.

## Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)

CUSMA was ratified by the Canadian Government on March 13, 2020. The Mexican Senate ratified the original agreement in June 2019, and in December ratified the changes demanded by U.S. Democratic lawmakers. In the U.S., Congress passed the agreement in January 2020. All three parties have ratified the agreement; however, the implementation date remains uncertain, but the earliest CUSMA can take effect is July 1, 2020.

## MERCOSUR

The Canada-Mercosur (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay) negotiations were to enter their 8<sup>th</sup> Round

from March 25 – April 3, 2020 in Brasilia. Due to the evolving situation with COVID-19 and its impact on international travel, the negotiations have been postponed until further notice. As Mercosur countries are significant agricultural exporters, especially for turkey and chicken, it is anticipated that Canada may be requested to provide market access concessions. In the case of Brazil, their annual turkey production is approximately 500 Mkg, with 170 Mkg in exports, equal to 33% of production.

## Comprehensive Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (CPTPP)/ Poultry Mitigation Working Group

In the April 17, 2019 Working Group report to the Minister of Agriculture, the national poultry supply management agencies proposed two key trade mitigation measures: i) development of an investment program that will be available to farmers, would be rolled out in 2020, and be in place for 10 years; and, ii) a market development fund for national agencies to promote Canadian raised products. The programming requested, does not include direct payments, and are targeted to support producers while they adjust to increased competition from CPTPP imports.

Of critical importance to TFC is market development funding. In the case of turkey, CPTPP will increase imports by 70%. An adequately funded Market Development program, would allow the turkey industry to grow domestic market demand, so it can absorb the increase in CPTPP imports and allow for Canadian producers to also increase their production.

The poultry and egg sectors were anticipating an announcement in the Spring 2020 budget that would fully and fairly support their producers due to the impact of CPTPP. Understandably, the COVID-19 situation is the top priority of the Federal Government and the agricultural sector at this time, potentially impacting the timing.

# On-Farm Programs Update

## **TFC On-Farm Programs Audits – COVID-19**

Given the current COVID-19 situation, Provincial Turkey Marketing Boards have suspended or postponed TFC On-Farm Programs audits for the time being or are planning to schedule audits for later in the year. As the situation evolves, TFC will work with Provincial Boards to ensure the maintenance of the TFC programs moving forward. Producers should contact their respective Provincial Board with any questions or concerns they may have.

In addition, TFC distributed guidelines for the TFC On-Farm Programs on components that need attention due to COVID-19. The guidelines provide measures regarding biosecurity, on-farm audits and record keeping, including procedures for using the Flock Information Reporting Form (Flock Sheet), the Turkey Load-Out Report and the Barn Entry Log. Additional information will follow for producers that may encounter a potential shortage of bedding material for their farm due to COVID-19. As the situation evolves, it is anticipated that further updates will be made to the guidelines. Producers are encouraged to notify their Provincial Boards of any challenges with the implementation of the TFC On-Farm Programs due to COVID-19.

## **Full Government Recognition for the TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program<sup>®</sup> – 20-Month Review**

On March 4, 2020, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) successfully completed the 20-months review of the TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program<sup>®</sup> (OFFSP), required to maintain its full government recognition status under the CFIA Food Safety Recognition Program (FSRP).

Full recognition for the TFC OFFSP was first obtained in 2018. This serves as a formal declaration that the program meets the requirements of the FSRP; is technically sound in that it promotes the production of safe food at the farm level and adheres to Hazard Analysis Critical Point (HACCP) principles; and, supports the effective implementation, administration, delivery and maintenance of the program.

## **Third-Party Audits of the TFC Flock Care Program<sup>®</sup>**

The 2019 round of third-party audits for the TFC Flock Care Program<sup>®</sup> (FCP) have been completed and the report received from the third-party audit provider (NSF Canada Agricultural Certification Company). The 2019 round of third-party audits found that the National Flock Care Program was implemented effectively and maintained on an ongoing basis and that animal care measures were consistently applied. The work of the selected farmers and the Provincial Boards is commended for the planning and execution of the third-party audits.

TFC, in combination with the Provincial Boards, is determining how to proceed with the 2020 round of third-party audits, in light of the current situation with COVID-19.



## Turkey Industry Antimicrobial Use Strategy

In response to feedback noted in a survey of producers and veterinarians, and to give more time to adjust and ensure the best chance of success of the AMU strategy, the TFC Board of Directors at the TFC 260<sup>th</sup> General Business Meeting held on November 27-28, 2019, revised the timeline for the implementation of the elimination of preventive use of Category III antibiotics from the end of 2019 to May 1, 2020.

Following the General Business Meeting, discussion has been ongoing on the best approach to move forward responsibly on the strategy. TFC has investigated how this could be done through capturing an inventory of available data and the development of additional communication materials on the outlook for Category III timelines. A backgrounder was written in consultation with a poultry veterinarian that sets the context for the strategy, covers how bacitracin works, what may happen if it is removed from the feed, and what strategies can be used to lessen the impact of its removal.

The **AMU Backgrounder** can be found, along with more resources on AMU, on the members only TFC On-Farm Programs Portal at [www.tfconfarmprograms.ca](http://www.tfconfarmprograms.ca).

## Biosecurity Reminder During Spring Migration

There is an increased risk of Avian Influenza (AI) infection to poultry flocks during spring wild bird migrations. AI can be brought into a barn by breaches in biosecurity, and it is most often transmitted from one infected commercial flock to another through contact with infected poultry or through contaminated equipment or people.

Turkey farmers should be on high biosecurity alert due to a recent outbreak of H7N3 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in a commercial turkey flock in South Carolina. This is the first confirmed case of HPAI in commercial poultry in the United States since 2017. This same strain caused an outbreak in British Columbia in 2004 and a case in Saskatchewan in 2007. It appears this HPAI strain mutated from a H7N3 low pathogenic strain that has been found in an on-going Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) outbreak in that area recently. There have also been a number of HPAI outbreaks across Europe.

Your best plan is to be prepared and follow strict biosecurity throughout the migration period as outlined in the TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program<sup>®</sup> (OFFSP). The TFC OFFSP includes mandatory and highly recommended elements that can help reduce the risk of avian influenza entering your flock.

If you have any concerns regarding the health status of your flock, contact your veterinarian immediately.

For more information, producers are encouraged to visit [www.tfconfarmprograms.ca](http://www.tfconfarmprograms.ca) or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca).

# Turkey Transport – Cluster 2 Research Update

## Foundational research looks at how warm and cool conditions affect birds

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) updated animal transport regulations came into effect on February 20, 2020, and with it, a renewed focus on the importance of health and wellbeing of animals that are being transported. But in a country with as many climate variations and geographic differences as Canada, how do we measure the health and wellbeing of animals on the move?

Dr. Trever Crowe, professor, College of Engineering and Dr. Karen Schwean-Lardner, associate professor, College of Agriculture and Bioresources at the University of Saskatchewan, set out to investigate the response of turkey hen and tom physiology, welfare and meat quality to several exposure conditions during simulated transport. Their conclusions? Turkeys handle high and low temperatures better than their team expected, and more research is needed to determine upper and lower limits.



**Turkeys in transport**  
Photo by Kailyn Beaulac

"Live transport can be a great concern to members of the public, because when it's -20C outside, it's natural to think it must be really cold inside those trucks," says Crowe. "But many people don't appreciate the amount of heat those birds are producing, and how well they tolerate exposure to various weather conditions."

The research team exposed mature turkeys to five temperature variations: 28C at 30% and 80% relative humidity, 20C at 30% and 80% relative humidity and -18C (which was not controlled for humidity). They used a total of 240 turkeys: 120 12-week-old hens and 120 16-week-old toms. Birds were placed in crates, mimicking the typical environment and space allowance during transportation. Each crate of birds was then placed inside a pre-conditioned environmental chamber, and bird behaviour and core body tempera-

ture were recorded for an 8-hour duration. Immediately after they were removed from the chamber, birds were processed and the team recorded live shrink, blood glucose concentration and other meat-quality measurements.

“We expected to see greater response in core temperature or meat colour, but there was no consistent response,” says Crowe. “Behavioural changes when the birds were exposed to 28C and -18C suggested that the birds were experiencing discomfort, but their muscle physiology was not significantly or consistently affected.”

Crowe notes that previous research on broiler chicken transportation has led to a greater understanding of how to manage a truck’s venting configurations, accounting for ambient temperature, humidity and the heat and moisture produced by birds. Skilled operators are trained to use tarps, container openings and tactics such as vehicle speed to distribute heat appropriately. However, because broiler chickens have fewer feathers and are smaller in size, they are more sensitive to cold temperatures than adult turkey toms and hens. “We know that mature turkeys are more hardy than broiler chickens, but we are still uncertain about the limits of temperature and duration combinations.”

This study laid the foundation for turkey transportation research. It has resulted in two scientific publications in Poultry Science, and the data have contributed to the development of the codes of practice. Next, Crowe and Schwean-Lardner hope to study a cooler set of conditions, and incorporate features such as air flow, noise, vibration and movement to more accurately simulate transport conditions. Eventually, they see opportunity to test temperature, humidity, stocking density and duration in isolation and combination, to understand how those factors could affect bird responses.

*This collaborative research was funded by the Canadian Poultry Research Council (CPRC) as part of the Poultry Science Cluster 2, which was supported by AAFC as part of Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.*

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**Turkeys handle high and low temperatures better than expected – and more research is needed to determine upper and lower limits.**

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## Upcoming TFC Business Meetings:

TFC 262<sup>nd</sup> Business Meeting  
June 16-18, 2020

TFC 263<sup>rd</sup> Business Meeting  
September 22-24, 2020

TFC 264<sup>th</sup> Business Meeting  
November 24-26, 2020

## COVID-19 office closure:

Please note that the TFC office remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All staff are working remotely and available during this time. If you are unsure of who to contact regarding an inquiry, please email [info@tfc-edc.ca](mailto:info@tfc-edc.ca) to be directed to an appropriate contact.



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