

OFAC Farm Animal Care Helpline Service

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Because animals can't call **911**

What is the Helpline Service?

The Helpline is a confidential “farmer helping farmer” approach of advice and referral on animal care. The Helpline service is provided by the Ontario Farm Animal Council to assist people in providing good care for their farm animals.

It provides a confidential way for people to report situations of farm animals that they feel require better care or for farmers themselves to call if they need some help.

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How does the Helpline Work?

The Helpline accepts calls about most types of farm animals: **beef cattle, dairy cattle, pigs, rabbits, chickens and turkeys.**

Helpline calls are accepted at the OFAC office at **(519) 837-1326**, during regular office hours, typically Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Callers are asked to provide specific and detailed information necessary to pursue the case. The information about the case, but not the name of the caller, is then passed on to the appropriate commodity group(s) for follow-up and/or visit. For example, a Helpline call about a dairy cow would be passed along to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, calls about pigs are passed along to Ontario Pork.

Helpline representatives are farmers or experienced staff people who can assess the situation and offer practical advice or necessary assistance to correct the situation if there is a problem. The Helpline representative then reports back to OFAC who, in turn, will relay this information back to the caller if they are interested. Callers to the Helpline are asked to identify themselves for purposes of follow-up, but such information is kept strictly confidential with OFAC.



Who can use the Helpline?

Anyone who is having difficulties meeting acceptable levels of care and management for their farm animals and anyone else who witnesses situations where animals are not being properly cared for.

What doesn't the Helpline cover?

- ▶ **Other farm animals:** Other than those listed above, such as sheep or deer or ratites. Calls relating to other types of livestock can be reported to the Helpline and may be referred to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) or the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for investigation. You could also call the OSPCA directly.
- ▶ **Pets or horses:** Concerns about pets or horses should be reported directly to the OSPCA, a local Humane Society or a local animal control officer.
- ▶ **Illegal Activities:** The Helpline is a volunteer service. If any laws are broken, the call must be forwarded to the appropriate authorities.
 - ▶ **Deadstock:** Farm animals need to be disposed of in accordance with regulations. Deadstock violations should be reported directly to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at **1-877-424-1300**.
 - ▶ **Neglect, Cruelty or Abuse:** If a particular case involves obvious abuse or neglect which warrant enforcement, the local humane society or Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) should be called directly. Calls to the OSPCA are also confidential. The OSPCA service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Phone: 1-877-ONT-SPCA (1-800-668-7722)
- ▶ **Emergencies:** The Helpline is designed to provide helpful advice, but not to deal with emergencies. If

there are animals in immediate distress or it's a weekend and you feel it needs attention right away, please contact your local humane society or the OSPCA.

- ▶ **Dangerous situations:** Helpline representatives should not be involved in any situation that has potential risks to personal safety. Please contact your local police or the OPP if you feel a case may have potential safety risks.

What's the difference between the Helpline and the Humane Society?

Here's a good way to explain the difference between the OFAC Helpline and the OSPCA service: the OFAC Helpline deals with thin animals, not starving animals. The idea is to try and reach those cases and animals before the situation worsens. The Helpline is a volunteer service; humane societies have legal authority. Sometimes Helpline representatives find the case needs to be turned over to the humane society, and in reverse, sometimes humane society representatives call the Helpline.

Why is the Helpline service needed?

The Helpline was started by the Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) in 1992 as a way to help improve farm animal care. The Helpline service came about because people within the farm community felt such a service was needed to allow farmers to get involved.

The Helpline is one more way for the farming community to work together to help fellow farmers and farm animals. It's also yet another good example for the public that demonstrates that if there's a problem with animal care, farmers want to be part of the solution. It's good for agriculture, it's good for the farmer, and most importantly, it's good for the animals.

Who is OFAC?

The Ontario Farm Animal Council is the voice for animal agriculture, representing over 40,000 livestock and poultry farmers, associations and businesses on issues in animal agriculture such as animal care, food safety, biotechnology and the environment.

For more information on OFAC or the Helpline Service, contact our office at:

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