Abstract: This is a qualitative study of the daily treatment and life experiences of dairy cattle in Canada. This paper draws on texts, government documents, scientific studies, books, websites, and personal observations. An ecofeminist despeciesist approach is used in the analysis to explore themes, assumptions, and paradigms regarding the dairy industry.
The Life of a Dairy Cow in Canada: An ecofeminist despeciesist critique of factory farming

In this paper I will analyze and critique some of the day to day occurrences in the life and handling of a dairy cow in Canada using an ecofeminist as well as a despeciesist approach. Throughout this paper I have used the pronouns of ‘she’, ‘who’, and ‘whom’ when referring to a cow as opposed to ‘it’ or ‘that’ in recognizing that each cow has agency and is a sentient being. In many ways the dairy cow is at the centre of Canada’s livestock industry. Her body has many uses for humans. The dairy cow is female and thus able to give birth to future veal, beef, or more dairy cattle. The milk from that same cow is used to produce dairy products for human consumption. When the dairy cow is spent, at approximately four to five years old, she is slaughtered for meat, leather, and rendering of her bones and cartilage. Depending on her condition, the meat from dairy cattle is often for lean hamburger as dairy cattle do not have excess fat. Unlike many animals in the livestock industry she is not a baby when slaughtered. She is slaughtered when all other possibilities of using her have expired. Thus she is at the centre of the livestock industry in a complex way: her body is used over the years for milk and also to produce offspring who are, in turn, exploited. When she is spent, her very body is sold, slaughtered, and consumed. Milk, whey, veal, beef appear in a significant variety of products in Canada. In 2014 dairy farm revenues were over $6 billion with approximately 1.3 million cows in Canada, (Canada’s Dairy Industry at a Glance).

Dairy farming relies directly on the reproductive system of the dairy cow. In order for the cow to produce milk she must be impregnated artificially as live insemination could cause skeletal damage to the cow who is physically smaller and weaker than the bull but also prone to osteoporosis from cycles of being bred, milked, bred again. In order to divert all energy inputs to milk, dairy cattle are bred to put on little body fat and little muscle. They could not easily support a bull in natural mating position.

According to Dr Olivier Berreville, dairy cows are genetically selected to have large udders that hang from large frames. This puts strain on the udder ligaments. In 1931 41.9 million dairy cows produced 62 million hectoliters of milk, and in 2011 only 1.4 million cows produced 77 million hectoliters of milk. In other words 97% fewer cows produced 24% more milk overall. As Berreville notes: “This dramatic increase in milk production per cow has a significant impact on the welfare of the animals, as reflected in their greatly reduced lifespan,” (Berreville, page 187). A dairy cow is now culled and sent to slaughter between four and five years of age in Canada as opposed to their natural twenty-five year lifespan. The dairy cattle on today’s farms endure severe lameness, mastitis, and digestive ailments, (Berreville, 2014, pp 186-7). Their entire being is conflated with their body and what it is designed to produce: feminized protein in the form of babies, milk, and their own bodies as cheaper cuts of meat such as hamburger.

Three challenges emerge in conducting this research. The first challenge is to remain as unbiased as possible. That I am applying an ecofeminist and a despeciesist approach could lead one to assert that I have a bias against the dairy industry. The issue of animal rights and the livestock industry is divisive in its nature. One could counter this by saying we are all biased: the dairy industry itself is not without bias. Each person and each institution has her/his/and its own biases and assumptions about the value of a life and the ontological value of that life. Analysis will be based on textual and observed data. Another challenge for this research is the potential accusation of being anthropomorphic in assigning human thoughts, feelings, and responses to cattle. However, research into the behaviour of cattle indicates that they are indeed sentient. In her book, The Inner World of Farm Animals, Amy Hatkoff recounts several documented cases where cows problem solve, use a tin shed as a sound amplifier, form friendships that are enduring and altruistic, are able to recognize several different faces of people and other animals. Cows experience emotions and form protective bonds with one another and with animals from other species. They try to protect themselves, their herd, and their young. Cows are sentient. The third challenge lies in the observation that textual sources contain a bias. The scientific positivistic based studies can be interpreted as being based on the assumption that cows are objects and not subjects with agency and sentience. The articles critical of the dairy industry accept the assumption that cows are emotional beings with sentience which we feel loss, whose pain matters, and who have inherent rights. The Code seems to fall within these two views. The Code seems to acknowledge that cows feel pain and stress as we see with its recommendations for analgesics and anesthetics. However, The Code also contains language that communicates an assumption that they are objects existing for human needs only. The articles of Berreville, Vasseur, et al cite measurable increased levels of cortisone in cows when undergoing procedures such as artificial insemination, dehorning, disbudding, and tail docking. The research of these latter authors and their style of presenting their arguments communicate the perspective that the agency and sentience of cows are indicated through empirically measured hormonal responses to treatments that are performed on them. As we interpret texts through our own paradigmatic influenced lens, I have chose to quote some texts at length in order to allow the reader to form his/her own opinion.

Literature Review:
A literature review indicates that there is very little scholarly work critiquing the way in which animals are raised as livestock in Canada. The literature review can be divided into 2 sections: Literature providing information on the standards, observations, and documentation of the treatment of dairy cattle; literature providing the principles of ecofeminist and despeciesist critiques.

**Literature regarding the observation and documentation of the treatment of dairy cattle:**

In order to explore the standard treatment of a dairy cow in Canada I will refer to the *National Farm Care Dairy Code of Practice for Canada* (*The Code*) and follow the life cycle of a dairy cow. *The Code* lists best practices for farmers to follow regarding care of young cows, housing, milking, care of sick or injured cows, transportation, and euthanasia or slaughter. In this way *The Code* provides a standard of practices for dairy farm throughout Canada:

> “The Codes are developed nationally as guidelines of all care and handling of the different species of farm animals. They are intended to promote sound management and welfare practices through recommendations and requirements for housing, management, transportation, processing and other animals’ husbandry practices. Requirements refer to either a regulatory requirement, or an industry imposed expectation outlining acceptable and unacceptable practices. Recommended best practices strive for a continuous improvement and encourage a higher level of care.” (Bold font and italics, *The Code’s*) (*The Code*, page 3).

Provinces regulate and govern the care and handling of livestock up until transportation and slaughter at which point federal regulations apply. *The Code* sets out what is generally accepted practice for the handling of livestock animals. However, following *The Code* is not required by law in all provinces. In Newfoundland and Labrador as well as in Prince Edward Island livestock personnel are legally required to follow the standards set out in *The Code*. In the rest of Canada, standards and adherence to *The Code* varies. For example, in British Columbia adherence to *The Code* is voluntary, and a livestock personnel can use following a practice set out in *The Code* as a defense in an animal cruelty claim. In all provinces and territories exemptions are made to animal cruelty laws when the handling of livestock is involved. The wording varies from region to region, but in general, as long as the handler is following practices that are deemed usual, regular, acceptable in practice, then he is exempt from prosecution, (Pippus, 2014).

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies began the development of codes of practice with respect to the treatment of livestock in 1980. During the period from 1992-2003 the process was continued by the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council. Codes of practice were developed and tested and finally the current code of practice was published by the National Farm Animal care Council in 2009. The federal government of Canada provides ongoing funding for the development and publication of *The Code* through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, (*The Code*, page 3). The existence and necessity of *The Code* itself reflects a philosophy of control, protection, and paternalism. On the one hand, without *The Code*, there may be no standards of care for dairy cattle; the fact that it exists reflects society’s attitude that cattle are beneath humans in worth and exist to serve human purposes. I will also analyze passages from *Health of Animals Regulations*, as established by the Government of Canada as the regulations therein set the standard for handling cattle in transport and at slaughter.

I will refer to various texts from livestock industry journals to supplement information regarding the life cycle of a dairy cow according to *The Code*. The *Journal of Dairy Science* provides several peer reviewed scientific articles on the care, handling, and feeding of dairy cattle. This provides insight into how dairy cattle are handled, injected, and considered in the industry. Jon Sorenson (*Critical Studies*) includes several relevant articles discussing scientific studies which measure stress levels experienced by dairy cattle when they are artificially impregnated, dehorned, experience the removal of their calves as well as the foundation of speciesism paradigm in the human psyche. Lisa Kemmerer (*Sister Species*) includes an article by animal rights activists, Twyla Francois, detailing her experiences and responses to witnessing the treatment of a downed dairy cow at a livestock auction.

**Literature providing basis for philosophic position of ecofeminist and despeciesist critique:**

Richard D. Ryder (*Animal Revolution*) provides a historical account of the misogynistic roots and the development of the speciesist paradigm in Western culture. The reflections and considerations for the ecofeminist critique will be drawn from the work of Carol J. Adams (*The Sexual Politics of Meat and Neither Man Nor Beast*) as well as from Josephine Donovan with Carol J. Adams (*The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*). Adams and Donovan provide the basis for an ecofeminist critique. Adams develops her ecofeminist critique into a consideration of the patriarchal theological structure that is the basis for speciesism. This paper will also consider philosophic underpinnings from Marcel Foucault’s work regarding the politics of truth.
Carolyn Merchant traces the development of capitalist exploitation and domination of nature from the Scientific Revolution to the present in her book, *The Death of Nature*.

**Methodology:**

This will be a qualitative research project using: textual analysis of literature; observations from livestock auctions and on farms; and narratives found in print or online. This paper will develop an ecofeminist despeciesist critique when analyzing the day to day life of dairy cattle in Canada. An ecofeminist critique analyzes patriarchal paradigms and considers them to be socially constructed forms of oppression against women, non-human animals, and the earth. The term ‘ecofeminism’ was developed by Françoise d’Eaubonne in the 1970's as a way of connecting feminism, ecology, environmentalism. Later writers such as Greta Gaard, Lori Gruen, Carol J. Adams, Josephine Donnovan, et al link feminism with animal rights theory. Ecofeminism provides a significant contribution to the critique of the way in which humans treat dairy cattle through its analysis of oppression and exploitation of the female body.


“Discrimination based on color of skin that occurs against those above the human-animal boundary is called *racism*; when it becomes unspeakably murderous, it is called genocide. Discrimination by humans occurs against those below the human-animal boundary is called *speciesism*; when it becomes murderous, it is called meat eating and hunting, among other things. The latter is normalized violence. Is it possible that speciesism subsumes racism and genocide in the same way that the word *animal* includes humans? Is there not much to learn from the way normalized violence disowns compassion?” (Adams 2007, page 22).

However, the word ‘ecofeminism’ maintains that it is female/human that is at the ontological apex and is in a position of bestowing compassion or humane treatment on those in lower ranks of the hierarchy. According to ecofeminism the threads of oppression of women and animals are interwoven. By becoming aware of the oppression of women we can be more sensitized to the oppression of animals and vice versa. However the presence of the word ‘feminism’ in ‘ecofeminism’ directs one’s attention back to the human ultimately. One may expect that an ecofeminist critique is for the ultimate benefit of feminists, that is, humans.

Ecofeminism’s critique of the dairy industry focuses on the exploitation of the cow’s female reproductive capacity. Dairy cow are artificially impregnated by an invasive process that is measurably stressful and potentially injurious. Once the calf is born, the calf is removed often within 24 hours in order that the milk can be diverted away from the calf to use for human consumption. Farmers, auction personnel, and slaughter house workers have been documented using sexualized commentary when referring to dairy cattle.

Speciesism is the view that animals are ontologically inferior to humans and exist for humans to exploit as they wish. According to speciesist paradigm humans can: grant or withhold rights from animals, and define which animals are sentient; socially construct phrases such as ‘farm animals’ in order to identify which animals can be exploited in overcrowded conditions, and slaughtered with minimum official oversight of humane treatment.

Concerning the definition of ecofeminism, Adams writes:

“Ecofeminism identifies a series of dualisms: culture/nature; male/female; self/other; white/non-white; rationality/emotion. Some include humans/animals in this series. According to ecofeminist theory, nature has been dominated by culture; female has been dominated by male; people of color have been dominated by white people; emotion has been dominated by rationality; animals... (dots: Adams). Where are the animals in ecofeminist theory and practice? I maintain that contemporary ecofeminist discourse, while potentially adequate to deal with the issue of animals, is now inadequate because it fails to give consistent conceptual place to the domination of animals as a significant aspect of the domination of nature.” (Adams, 1995, page 87).

For Adams the reasons ecofeminist thought has excluded animals from its discourse are patriarchal in nature and hence undermine ecofeminist thought from the outset. This paper will look at ecofeminism not from the perspective of what factory farming methods say about the treatment of women and the female reproductive cycle per se. To do so would be speciesist in that it would ‘use’ and exploit the plight of dairy cattle in order to get an understanding and perspective on patriarchal paradigms regarding women and female reproductive organs and processes. This paper will apply ecofeminism’s critique of patriarchal suppression and exploitation of the female body as well as a despeciesist critique of dairy farming techniques in
order to arrive at a clearer appreciation for how we as humans use our position as the most powerful beings on the planet to control and exploit vulnerable beings for profit.

Ecofeminism falls short of understanding the full impact of how humans exploit the sentient beings that dairy cows are as it posits the human at the top of the ontological hierarchy. In this way ecofeminism fails to place the cow and her life experience at the centre of an inquiry. To fully grasp the implications of what humans are doing to dairy cattle a despeciesist approach will be used. A despeciesist approach allows one to reflect on how humans use their power and ability to dominate non-human animals in order to justify in a circular way their continued exploitation.

I coined the word despeciesist from two words ‘de’ and ‘speciesism’. Richard D Ryder first used/created the word ‘speciesism’ in 1970. Speciesism refers to the view that all species occupy a rank in a hierarchical arrangement such that humans are at the top ontologically and non-human animals are beneath and exist for humans to exploit as they wish. ‘De’ is taken from the Latin as meaning ‘about’ as in ‘to do with’. ‘De’ can also refer to the process analyzing or deconstructing as in analyzing instances where we find ‘speciesism’ through analysis. Ultimately, this paper is a despeciesist critique of the treatment of dairy cattle. It is important to move from the ecofeminist to the despeciesist approach as this discussion will guide us from a paradigm where the human is at top of the hierarchy even in a most compassionate way to one in which there is no hierarchy. The approach in this paper is despeciesist as opposed to post-humanist.

Weisberg points out that while post-humanism repudiates the anthropocentric ontology of humanism, it lacks an ethic of awareness regarding politically powerless non-human animals (Weisberg, 2014). Posthumanism concerns itself with the conflation of human, non-human animal, as well as technology. However, it overlooks the ethical issues involved in how humans treat non-human animals on a day to day basis.

Helping one to awaken to the prevalence of the constructed speciesist paradigm are the words of Karen Davis: “seeing animals in industrialized settings such as factory farms encourages the view that animals are inherently passive objects whose only role in life is to serve the human enterprise,” (Davis, 2005). David Nibert also elucidates the speciesist paradigm with: “Advocates for other animals have also increasingly documented terrible violence against other animals, especially those relegated to the socially constructed status of ‘farm animal,’” (Nibert, 2014). Nibert uses the term ‘other animals’ when referring to non-human animals. The class of ‘farm animals’ is recognized by Nibert as a social construct that serves the human owners’ purposes of gaining more profit from exploiting such animals. Lisa Micheelsen of the University of Athabasca has pointed out the connection that the social construct of farm animals relegates them as slaves and that once designated as a slave the continued abuse of such animals is permitted with society’s approval.

A despeciesist critique recognizes that rationality as possessed by humans is a conveniently chosen characteristic by which to organize a hierarchy of beings and as such it serves human’s purposes. One could have selected the characteristic of ‘breathes with lungs’ in which case, humans and non-humans with lungs would be on par ontologically. One could also select any of the following characteristics: has agency; has a stress response to discomfort; has a tendency to protect offspring and recognize kin. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), founder of utilitarianism, wrote the following in his treatise on ethics with regard to animals and sentence: “The question is not, ‘Can they reason?’ nor, ‘Can they talk?’ but ‘Can they suffer?’” (Bentham, 1988).

If these latter characteristics defined one’s group of belonging, then dairy cattle and humans would be ontologically equal. The subjugation of dairy cattle to artificial insemination, removal of young, dehorning, disbudding, tail docking, teat removal, confinement, emaciation from milking would then be recognized as abhorrent on a moral level.

A despeciesist critique recognizes that the current exemption of livestock animals from the protections accorded to companion animals under the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty Act (SPCA Act) is based on a social construct that is applied simply for human’s convenience at great cost to the animals.

**Analysis of Daily Treatment and Life Experiences of a Dairy Cow in Canada:**

**Housing:**

The picture on the cover The Code presents a pastoral and peaceful scene of cows lying comfortably in a grassy field looking towards the camera. They seem to have a healthy fat covering on their bodies. They appear to be comfortable and content in this outdoor setting. Behind the cows are silos and a few barns. As we learn about housing and dairy cattle management practices we may well wonder how often or how many cows enjoy this idyllic outdoor setting. *The Code* is arranged in 6 chapters: Accommodation, Housing, and Handling Facilities; Feed and Water; Health and Welfare Management; Husbandry Practices; Transportation; Euthanasia. This paper will consider each of these sections as well as follow the age related experiences of a dairy cow.
The Code recommends where and how a dairy cow should be housed depending upon her use for the industry which, in turn, is assessed according to various factors such as size, age, reproductive state, and lactation level. Components of a housing system would include stall design, location of water troughs, cattle traffic patterns; feeding system; stocking numbers. Housing systems can include loose housing (where groups of cattle mingle together); tie stalls (in which cattle may be tethered for 24 hours per day, free stalls (where cattle are enclosed). Access to pasture and the outdoors is at the discretion of the farmer. With the pressure on farmers to increase productivity and decrease staff, 24-hour confinement systems are becoming more common. The design of housing systems should minimize “suffering from pain, fear, injury, or distress;” and allow cattle to “express innate behaviour,” (The Code, page 5). The Code addresses housing recommendations for specific stages of a dairy cattle’s development beginning with unweaned calves followed by weaned heifers (female cows that have not been bred), lactating cows, and dry cows (cows that are not producing milk as they have run out of milk and have not yet been rebred). The Code recommends housing unweaned calves in individual pens such as hutches or in small groups. The Code specifies as a requirement that calf bedding must provide “comfort, insulation, warmth, dryness, and traction... housing must allow calves to stand up, lie down, turn around, adopt normal resting postures, and have visual contact with other calves.” If grouped together, the space must be large enough for all calves to lie down at the same time, (The Code, page 5). Carol J. Adams indicates that the size of a veal crate is 22 inches by 54 inches (Adams, 1995).

“Unweaned calves were housed in pens (with barriers or solid walls) in 45.9% of surveyed farms, 27.0% in metal or wood crates, 13.9% in tie-stall, 7.4% in hutches, and 5.7% were tied to the wall in front of cows’ tie-stalls. The Canadian Dairy Code of Practice (National Farm Animal Care Council, 2009) requires that housing allows calves to easily stand up, lie down, turn around, adopt normal resting postures, and have visual contact with other calves. It is unlikely that many of the types of housing used (i.e., crates, tie-stall, or tying against a wall) met these requirements,” (Vasseur, et al., 2010).

“Adequate rest appears important for the growth of calves (e.g., the longer the calves rest, the better they grow); however, the softness of the floor (concrete vs. rubber mat) has little effect on growth and resting behavior (Hänninen et al., 2005). In surveyed farms, the floor of housing for nonweaned calves was mainly solid concrete (74.4%) or rubber mattresses (11.6%). Bedding was mainly straw or hay (65.4%) or shaving (30.1%). In summary, most producers housed calves individually and many used inappropriate housing systems (crate, tie stall, or even attached against a wall),” (Vasseur, et al., 2010).

Calves are removed from their mothers often within 24 hours of birth. The milk from the mother cow is then be diverted for human consumption. The Code acknowledges that newborn calves are at risk of illness and malnutrition and thus recommends the individual hutches presumably for ease of treatment and observation regarding food consumption. However, the obvious way to alleviate the risk of illness and malnutrition in the calf is to keep the calf with his/her mother. But this would then mean that the milk could not be diverted to humans. Recall that The Code recommends housing that allows cattle to express their ‘innate behaviour’. Clearly separating the calf and mother cow at birth inhibits the expression of the innate behaviour of nursing and body contact.

Heifers are kept together in small groups of similar age and size. They are then either used on the farm as dairy cows when old enough to be bred, sold through livestock auctions to other dairy producers, or they are sold and slaughtered for meat. While The Code recognizes that housing design for milking cows impacts cow comfort, The Code also notes that the ultimate goal of cow comfort is profitability of one’s dairy operation (The Code, page 6). The Code recommends: that good bedding be provided; if cows are standing, the floors should be soft to prevent lameness; floors provide traction; cows be given the opportunity to exercise daily (weather permitting); cows should be able to easily avoid more dominant cows, (The Code, page 7).

The statistics for Canadian barns for 2014 indicate that 52% of dairy cows are kept in tie-stalls, 40% are kept in free stalls, and 8% are kept in robotic barns (Types of Barns, 2014). Cows in tie stalls are chained for up to 24 hours per day. Cows in ‘free’ stalls are not free. They are confined to a stall, often for days at a time and in crowded conditions. This means that 92% of Canadian dairy cows (those chained or confined to a stall) are unable to engage in normal behaviours such as: social interactions of their choosing, nurturing their young. This confinement can lead to stress, metabolic disorders, and lameness. Cows where robotic methods are used are less confined but must be trained to the robotic system. While the robotic system may seem more appealing and humane, it would appear that it is not. Berreville notes that cows are often frightened by the milking stalls of the robotic systems, and are subject to severe beatings from frustrated employees in their attempts to ‘train’ cows to enter the robotic milking stalls, (Berreville, page 194).

The material culture of a dairy farm is constructed for the convenience of the producers: Berreville writes:
“Confinement in tie-stalls severely restricts freedom of movement. It is stressful for the animals...and can lead to the development of stereotypies... Additionally some barns install electrified devices above the animals that deliver shocks when cows defecate or urinate in their natural position (with back arched in order to ‘train’ the cows to do so in the trench behind the stall. Unintended shocks are common, with one Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs INFOSheet citing that up to 90% of all shocks are unrelated to urination or defecation, (Berreville, 2014, pp 190-191).

Barn fires are tragic for the cows confined in stalls and particularly in tie stalls as they burn or suffocate to death. In June of 2015 at a farm in Quebec 250 cows confined to a barn perished in a fire, (CBC, 2015).

The female animal is managed according to her reproductive stage and how that reproductive stage serves human needs: male calves are left to die, or sold to slaughter as ‘bob’ veal, or raised as veal calves; heifers are segregated, bred cows and cows are milked. Cows confined in a tie stall are often unable to adjust themselves to a position of comfort when they are about to give birth. Tie-stalls often have a ‘trainer’ above the cow’s back which emits an electric shock in order to train the cow to urinate and defecate in an alley cut in the floor that runs behind the row of cows. While the cow is birthing in a tie stall she is often shocked. Calves can be born in manure, increasing their risk of infection. It is not uncommon for calves to be removed from their mothers in Canada within 24 hours following birth. If they are not left to die or sold to slaughter, they are either tied or kept in veal sheds. In order to prevent strangulation the tie chain is often so short it prevents the calf from lying down. In a natural herd permitted to live according to the rhythms of the cattle themselves, calves would continue to nurse from their mothers for 6 – 12 months. Weaning occurs naturally and progressively. However, on a dairy farm the milk is diverted for human use and, as a result, the calf may not receive the colostrum which is extremely important for the development of his/her immune system. Calves are fed milk replacers which, while less costly than feeding them their mother’s milk, is still an expense to the farmer. Hence calves are kept in a state of hunger called ‘restricted feeding’ in order that they eat grain and hay.

Studies have shown that forced separation from their mothers at 24 hours, forced early weaning lead to stress, emotional distress, physical failure to thrive, and stress vocalizations, (Berreville, 2014, page 190). Young calves kept on the farm are subjected to ear tagging, as well as mutilations such as disbudding, dehorning, and tail docking. Furthermore while The Code requires the use pain control medications for disbudding, dehorning, castration, and extra teat removal, it would seem that in reality farmers in Canada tend not to use such pain medications. A study by Vasseur et al., shows that : “dehorning and removal of extra teats were both done at a late age and the majority of producers report not using pain control (no use of anesthetic or analgesic) during these procedures,” (Vasseur, et al., 2010).

When we critique the housing of cows and calves through an ecofeminist despeciesist approach we can see that the confinement, chaining, stressful separation of young from mother confines the female body and the female’s ability to give birth in order to exploit every aspect. The profit driven livestock industry sees the female body as a thing to be owned and exploited through processes that completely reduce her to an object in order that maximum profit can be extracted to serve human demands.

Feed and Water
It is significant that the first topic The Code addresses under “Feed and Water” is the cow’s Body Condition Score (BCS) as maintaining a healthy BCS is extremely difficult for the dairy cow as any visit to a livestock auction will attest. In fact it is not uncommon to see an inspector from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Farms and Rural Affairs at the larger livestock auctions in Ontario in order to monitor the body condition of dairy cattle.

The cow’s Body Condition Scoring (BCS) is a system that rates a cow’s appearance and subcutaneous fat deposits. A cow with body condition of 1 is very thin; while a body condition score of 5 is obese. The Code and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Farms and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) webpage entitled: Using Body Condition Scoring in Dairy Herd Management, (January, 1989), discuss the management of the Body Condition Score for dairy cows from early lactation to late lactation and the dry period. According to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Farms and Rural Affairs: “If you were to monitor a cow’s BCS regularly, from onset to end of lactation, and then draw a graph, it would be a mirror image of the lactation curve. You would expect to see a low point in the BCS at the same time the cow’s lactation peaks. As milk production decreases, the cow slowly builds her reserves back up, until the end of her lactation,” (OMAFRA, 2010).

The Code acknowledges that the BCS of dairy cattle will fluctuate depending on which stage they are at in calving and lactating. According to The Code, BCS is important as a too thin cow will have lower milk production and reduced fertility; a too fat cow may have health issues such as difficulty calving, cysts on ovaries, etc. A too low or too high BCS interferes with productivity of the dairy. The Code requires that a producer take corrective action when the BCS of cows is 2 or lower. However, in my
observations of cows at rural auctions, it is not uncommon to see dairy cattle with BCS of 2. A perusal of photographs of prized dairy cattle appearing at Toronto’s Royal Winter Agricultural Fair shows cows that are thin, Body Condition Score of 2. The ribs and pelvic bones are clearly visible in the above pictures found on the Fair’s Facebook page. This is below the recommended level of 2.75 – 3.75 as recommended by The Code for various stages of dairy cow life.

The BCS of a cow is ascertained by a subjective judgment on the part of the observer. Technology is available to help determine the BCS in a more objective way; however, the cost of such equipment is prohibitive to most dairy farmers. One may question whether such technology would actually change the living situation for dairy cattle when prized cows appear to have a BCS of 2 to 2.5. One may also ask the question if this is how dairy cattle that are prized appear, what is the BCS of the ones tucked away in the barn?

A despeciesist critique of the practices around feeding a cow would indicate that it is cruel that cows lose an unhealthy degree of weight in lactation as their resources are going to produce milk which is then diverted for human consumption. It is the human activity which leads to the conditions of low BCS. However, OMAFRA cites a study connecting low BCS to genetics and not human diversion of cows’ milk: “In recent studies, BCS variation of early-lactation cows was monitored when environmental factors, including feeding, were kept constant. Contrary to what you would expect, BCS variation was unrelated to potential inadequate feeding, suggesting BCS variation was under genetic control,” (OMAFRA, 2010). The human action of repeated cycles of artificial insemination, birthing, milking and removal of milk is what creates the lower body condition score in dairy cattle. Accepting the exploitation of cows as a normalized activity, humans do not see our responsibility for the cow’s low BCS and thus we cite genetics. While genetics may play a role in how a cow’s fat is used by her body in the repeated cycle of pregnancies and the unnatural levels of lactation, the existence of that repetitive cycle as well as the tremendous amount of milk removed with each milking are clearly factors behind the challenge of maintaining a healthy BCS in the first place.

The OMAFRA website discusses technology which uses laser and imaging systems to allow for an automated BCS determination. Nothing of the cow is hers. If a cow does not drop BCS from the time of calving to the next conception, the probability favours a male calf being born. If the cow drops 1 BCS score, the probability favours a female calf. (Automated Body Condition Score, OMAFRA, 2010). The tone of these publications in their discussion of Body Condition Scoring is such that the cow’s body and her ability to bear young are viewed by the producer/farmer only in terms of planning the herd population and ultimate profitability. The welfare of the cow is not an issue.

The Code requires that cows be provided with feed and water appropriate for their purpose for the industry. Such considerations as the ease of access of water sources as well as the water source being checked for cleanliness and stray voltage shocks are recommendations only. While cows evolved as grazers who would walk 2.5 miles per day and spend their day grazing, the dairy cow is tied to a stall and fed a feed of grain designed to produce milk. The combination of restraint and high grain feed with animal by-products leads to metabolic health problems for the cow (Lohan, 2010).

Health

Diseases among dairy cattle are common and are managed to minimize the use of antibiotics which would entail loss of milk and loss of profit. The diseases experienced by dairy cattle are human induced and not natural. They are the result of feeding diets designed to provide richer milk, continuous cycle of pregnancy and lactation, confinement to tie stalls or free stalls, stress of robotic milking systems. The unnatural diets fed to dairy cattle interfere with the rumen in the gut, which in turn can cause metabolic diseases, twisted gut, and hoof ailments (the hooves grow according to the metabolism).

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1 https://scontent-lga3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-xla1/t31.0-8/12314291_10153714160577618_521806692822860773_o.jpg
The use of the cow herself in the continuous cycle of insemination, birth, and milk diversion contributes to the ill health and lameness of the cow. Ketosis and mastitis are two examples of serious, painful, common and chronic ailments created by the dairy industry itself.

“Ketosis is a common disease of adult cattle. It typically occurs in dairy cows in early lactation and is most consistently characterized by partial anorexia and depression,” (Herdt, 2014). Ketosis is associated with increased fat mobilization typical in early lactation when the energy demands to produce milk are higher than the energy taken in by the cow with her food. She starts to use her own fat stores such as they are to produce milk. This leads to a metabolic condition and the release of ketones into the bloodstream. For the cow this can lead to lameness, reduced food intake, raised temperature, and disturbances in her central nervous system, (Herdt, 2014; http://www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/194/acetonaemia-ketosis/).

The Cattle Site is a website dedicated to agri-business. The Cattle Site article ends the discussion of ketosis with a comment that ‘individual problem cows’ may require and annual treatment program to maintain the chemical metabolic balance within their body. If we apply a despeciesist critique to this observation we may notice that the cows are interpreted here as ‘the problem’. According to The Cattle Site, the problem is not what humans are doing to the cows. The reason a cow metabolizes her own fat stores is that the human removes much more milk from the cow’s body than a calf would upon natural nursing. In fact a cow on a dairy farm produces approximately 20,000 pounds of milk per year which is 10 times the amount of milk she would produce if she nursed the calf herself, (Lohan, 2010). Humans have created the conditions that give rise to ketosis in cows and then through language we label the cow as ‘the problem’. We frame ourselves as not being responsible for the conditions affecting dairy cattle. The same framing and denial of responsibility by the human is true of mastitis.

Mastitis, a painful inflammatory infection of the udder, is a common problem in dairy cattle. In fact, it is so common, it is considered normal that a barn have some cows with mastitis on a regular basis, (Akam, 1989). This is cruelly ironic as the cow’s ability to produce milk is what she is valued for; however, it is that production of milk continuously in a body bred to have large udders that contributes to mastitis. Mastitis is now associated with decreased fertility in dairy cattle and can be fatal. In order to produce milk, a cow must be impregnated. Mastitis as well as the genetic selection that has led to the higher milk yields associated with larger udders, have led to lower fertility rates. Ironically this higher milk yield for lower input is directly linked to lower fertility rates. An infertile cow cannot produce milk.

“The constant decrease in fertility in dairy cattle has been a widespread problem for the last few decades (Diskin and Morris, 2008). Pregnancy rates as low as 35 to 45% are observed in modern high-producing herds (Royal et al., 2000). Such a decrease is largely attributed to the genetic selection that privileged the direct connection between energy intake and milk yield at the expense of other physiological functions, including reproduction (Leroy et al., 2008a). High milk production is linked to mastitis, the most common disease affecting dairy cows worldwide (Halasa et al., 2007). The first evidence of a relationship between mastitis and decreased fertility was reported 20 yr ago (Moore et al., 1991),” (Rahman, et al., 2012).

“Ketosis is an inflammatory disease of adult cattle. It typically occurs in dairy cows in early lactation and is most consistently characterized by partial anorexia and depression,” (Herdt, 2014). Ketosis is associated with increased fat mobilization typical in early lactation when the energy demands to produce milk are higher than the energy taken in by the cow with her food. She starts to use her own fat stores such as they are to produce milk. This leads to a metabolic condition and the release of ketones into the bloodstream. For the cow this can lead to lameness, reduced food intake, raised temperature, and disturbances in her central nervous system, (Herdt, 2014; http://www.thecattlesite.com/diseaseinfo/194/acetonaemia-ketosis/)

The way through which mastitis impairs fertility could be aspecific and common to any inflammatory process. Elevated body temperature, a classical symptom of acute mastitis, is a most likely candidate. It is known that a temperature increase around fertilization and early embryonic development significantly decreases oocyte competence and embryonic survival (Hansen, 2009). Decreased feed intake, another common symptom in animals experiencing clinical infection, may alter energy metabolism and cause further disruption of reproductive function (Hockett et al., 2005; Leroy et al., 2008b),” (Rahman, et al., 2012)

The industry based literature regarding mastitis in dairy cows prioritizes the cost to the producer. If the suffering experienced by the cow is mentioned at all, it is listed after the economic costs. The web article published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) focuses only on the economic loss to the producer and not to the pain and suffering experienced by a cow with mastitis, (Akam et al., 1989). The FAO article does refer to the possibility that a cow may sicken, die, or have to be ‘culled’ but this is only in so far as such outcomes entail economic loss. The Code does mention animal welfare with regard to mastitis: “mastitis is a production, food quality, and safety issue. From an animal welfare perspective, it can be a local painful infection for the cow...,” (The Code, page 24). We may note that the economic, milk quality and safety concerns are prioritized.

A contagious form of mastitis spreads from cow to cow through dirty bedding, unsterilized gloves or hands; the producer’s clothing, manure from another cow, and so on. The Code recommends that infected cows be kept separate from non-infected cows. One common way of ensuring that cows do not spread infections amongst each other is to keep them in tie stalls where each cow is tied 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The FAO article recommends that cows with persistent mastitis infections be culled or slaughtered. The welfare of the cow is secondary. I have yet to find a suggestion in the industry
centered agriculture literature that perhaps a dairy producer allows a cow to have an extended ‘dry’ period where she is not bred and can recover while not being milked. In terms of prevention of mastitis, The Code offers recommendations of best practices only and not requirements. Such recommendations include disinfecting the teat, changing bedding frequently, etc. These recommendations support the continued use of the cow for milking which involves continued pain for her. Allowing a cow to have an extended break from the cycle of breeding and lactating is neither a recommendation nor a requirement.

Ketosis and mastitis are conditions that cows endure as a result of human exploitation of the female’s capacity to produce milk upon birth of their calf. Another factor affecting a cow’s health is what those in the livestock industry inject into the cow in order to increase milk production and extend the time over which she can be used to produce milk. The hormones Bovine Somatotropin and Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin (rbST and bST) are used to increase and extend the timeline of milk production in dairy cows. Although these formulae have not been permitted for use in Canada, they are used in the US. Experiments have been conducted to determine the most effective point in the cow’s lactation cycle where ‘most effective’ is means higher milk yield.

Typically a cow’s milk production peaks at 70 days of lactation and then slowly decreases until milk production stops. Without the use of rbST or BST hormones, a cow is rested for a period (often about 60 days) before she is impregnated and the cycle of pregnancy and milk production continues. With rbST or BST, the cow need not be impregnated – and the dry period is shortened – cows can be used continuously to produce milk. Studies have shown that if a cow is injected with rbST or BST at the peak lactation time, then lactation is extended as the effect of rbST or BST is to prevent the deterioration of the mammary cells in the udder by diverting nutrition away from producing body fat and to the production of mammary cells.

"Infertile cows (determined nonpregnant by rectal palpation) from 1 to 6 previous lactations and with a dry period ≥50 d were induced into lactation by administering daily s.c. injections of estradiol cypionate at 2 mg/kg of BW per day (Pfizer, Mexico DF, Mexico; esterified estrogen more potent and longer lasting than estradiol-17B) and 0.10 mg/kg of BW per day progesterone (Pfizer) from d 1 to 7. Estradiol cypionate (2 mg/kg) was applied from d 8 to 14. Somatotropin (Lactotropin, 500 mg of zinc bST, Elanco Animal Health, Guadalajara, Mexico) was applied on d 1, 6, 16, and 21. Lactation was triggered by administration of 0.03 mg/kg of BW per day of flumethasone (Fluvet, Fort Dodge, Mexico DF, Mexico) injected s.c. daily for 3 d (d 18 to 20). Milking was initiated on d 21. All cows were destined to be culled after the induced lactation; therefore, they were not inseminated while lactating.” (Mellado, etal., 2011). Note ‘d’ refers to ‘day’ or ‘days’.

“Findings show that 305-d milk yield increased with increasing number of lactations in high-yielding cows induced into lactation and subjected to long-term treatment with rbST, tapering off on the fifth lactation. After the second lactation, these barren cows deliberately managed for extended lactation, with emphasis in maximizing lactation persistency with sustained application of rbST, produced similar total milk yields, regardless of lactation number, indicating that old cows (>6 lactations) are still suited for this management scheme. Because of the chronic heat load in this zone during most of the year, a mild negative effect of heat stress on 305-d milk yield was observed in cows induced into lactation in spring and summer. Peak milk yield proved to be a good predictor of 305-d milk yield but not total milk yield. The use of extended lactations in barren cows induced hormonally into lactations and treated with rbST throughout lactation in an intensive dairy farming system is commercially viable in countries where use of rbST and steroids is permitted in cattle. This system suits dairy producers in areas where a surplus of cull cows exists due to harsh ambient conditions, because it ameliorates poor reproductive performance in high-yielding dairy cows, as greater percentages of cows are lactating throughout the year, and fewer replacement heifers are required. This increase in farm efficiency is mainly due to extended herd life, additional milk income over feed costs, and reduced heifer costs per cow being replaced over a longer time,” (Mellado, etal., 2011).

Recombinant Bovine Somatotropin hormone is used to induce lactation in non-pregnant cows and can extend the use of a cull or spent cow. The cull cow who is already exhausted and spent is thus spent even further. The hormones divert food energy away from the cow’s body to milk production – the cow’s body condition score will deteriorate even further. A veterinarian recently told me that dairy cattle in the US are frequently spent after 1 or 2 lactation cycles (personal conversation). However, the use of rbST or BST is not without controversy regarding animal and human health. Some animal health studies have shown that cows administered rbST or BST experience a variety of painful, chronic, and often fatal complications: a 50% probability of increased lameness due to metabolic imbalances; a 19% decrease in fertility; a 25% increase in mastitis; injection site complications; and significant deterioration of body condition, (Health Canada, 1999). Health Canada acted to ban the use of rbST and BST in Canadian cows in 1999. While Health Canada acknowledged that studies of the effects on human health seemed to indicate there was no increased risk of cancer, scientists in Canada are following ongoing research into the effects of these drugs. Some studies conducted in the US would seem to indicate that there is an increased risk of colon-rectal cancers...
associated with the use of rbST or bST in milk production, (Hansen, 1997). In the Health Canada announcement about the ban, the effect of bST and rbST on animal health was cited as a main concern:

“"The findings of the animal safety committee, when combined with our own assessment, made it quite clear that Health Canada had to reject the request for approval to use rbST in Canada, as it presents a sufficient and unacceptable threat to the safety of dairy cows,' said Weiner. ‘The safety of both human and animal health are critical considerations when assessing a new veterinary drug,’ he explained”, (Health Canada, 1999).

The general result of these studies and reviews is that more scientific research is required to determine the effects of ingesting rbST or bSt milk products. However, rbST and bST continues to be used in some countries such as the US and Mexico. While it is interesting to note that the Health Canada announcement of the ban on the use of rbST and bST in Canada lists animal health as a concern, The Trans Pacific Partnership allows for the importation of US dairy products into Canada. Dairy Farmers of Canada anticipate that this will displace approximately 3.25% of dairy produced in Canada. It also would mean that there will be a milk from cows injected with rbST and bST may be imported into Canada.

According to The Code “lameness is recognized as one of the most serious (and costly) animal welfare issues affecting dairy cattle,” (The Code, page 23). The Code cites the main causes of lameness to be nutrition and environment. The hoof of the cow acts as a metabolic organ in that it grows in response to metabolic wastes in the cow’s bloodstream. If the cow’s body has too much metabolic waste through inappropriate feeding, high levels of stress, or infectious diseases, the hooves become inflamed in response to toxins and lameness results. If the cow lives on a concrete floor, or one that is unclean and in which bacteria can grow and spread, then hoof lameness can result. In discussions with producers, employees, and veterinarians hoof lameness is a serious issue and is particularly common where cows do not move freely in spaces that are clean and well ventilated. Treating lameness issues with medications does not actually remove the cause of the lameness when the cause is inappropriate feed, lack of movement (tie-stalls), or an unsanitary environment.

The Code provides a Gait Scoring System for Dairy Cows listing the degree of lameness from 1 (sound) to 5 (severely lame). In an appendix The Code also provides Guidelines for Dealing with Compromised Cattle, Sheep, and Goats (The Guideline) in which we find a listing of ‘Lameness Classes’:

- **Lameness Classes:**
  These categories can be used to determine the status of an animal’s mobility, from normal to non-ambulatory.

  **Transport as soon as possible**
  Class 1
  Visibly lame but can keep up with the group: no evidence of pain

  Class 2
  Unable to keep up; some difficulty climbing ramps. Load in rear compartment.

  **Not recommended for transport***
  Class 3
  Requires assistance to rise, but can walk freely

  **Do Not Load or Transport***
  Class 4
  Requires assistance to rise; reluctant to walk, halted movement

  Class 5
  Unable to rise or remain standing.

*Any animal, including Lameness Classes 3, 4, or 5 may be transported for veterinary treatment on the advice of a veterinarian,” (The Guideline).

The word ‘pain’ is the only word in the Lameness Classes listing that acknowledges a sensation on the cow’s part. Furthermore this word occurs only in the description for Lameness Class 1 and is used in the negative as in ‘no evidence of pain’. This seems contradictory when taken in context with the rest of the description in Class 1. One may question: if the cow is visibly lame, is
this not evidence that she is in pain? What more evidence would one seek to have? Pain is not mentioned in any of the other classes; however, clearly as the lameness becomes more severe, the pain would also increase in severity. The other words to describe the cow are from the point of view of the observer, not the cow – as in ‘halted movement’, ‘reluctant to walk’. Let us consider the words such as ‘reluctant to walk’ and ‘unable to rise or remain standing’. Surely the cow is experiencing severe pain in these states. However, the word ‘pain’ as a sensation experienced by the cow is not mentioned here. The author has observed lame cows in Classes 1 and 2 at rural auctions; while investigators have observed Lameness in classes 3 - 5. In fact lameness among dairy cattle at livestock auctions is so common that, as cited before, an OMAFRA representative routinely attends some of the larger ones specifically to observe the culled cows and euthanize them immediately if necessary. As in discussions of BCS and mastitis, The Code discusses lameness in terms of the economic cost to the producer. The cow’s welfare is of concern only to the extent that it affects economic losses through lower rates of production.

The Guideline does warn against transporting animals in a way that may cause them suffering: “Do not ... Transport a sick or injured animal where undue suffering may result...load or unload animals in a way that would cause injury or undue suffering. Crowd animals to such an extent as to cause injury or undue suffering,” (The Code, page 59). This is the single section of The Code that acknowledges the cow as a being able to feel and experience suffering. In 7 bullet points, the word ‘suffering’ occurs 3 times. However, throughout the rest of The Code, the cow is not acknowledged as a being that might experience suffering. Olivier Berreville cites several studies which indicate the cows experience stress and suffering at many times during their use as dairy cattle such as, for example, at dishorning, during artificial insemination, and when their calves are removed. Only in transport at the end of the cow’s life does her experience of suffering matter. It seems that her ability to experience suffering is allowed to enter human consciousness when she is of no more use as a dairy cow. While she is of use as a dairy cow her suffering is not seen as a possibility.

A despeciesist critique recognizes that we construct and frame the experiences of a dairy cow to suit our ends. Thus when the cow is being used to produce milk, we frame and define her as an object without suffering. When the cow is spent we can we can use her suffering and pain to justify the arduous and dangerous journey in a livestock trailer to slaughter and the eventual acts of slaughter. Slaughter in this context is framed as an act of mercy. While ‘euthanasia’ is literally considered a merciful death, the livestock industry frames slaughter as such. Euthanasia would be carried out by trained personnel or by a veterinarian on site at an auction or farm. When euthanized a compromised cow is not required to hold herself up in a trailer travelling over bumpy roads, in extreme heat or cold, in crowded conditions, without food or water for several days. Her suffering is acknowledged and ended with a penetrative captive bolt on the spot. However, it is common to see culled cows at auctions or on farms as designated for slaughter only. It is framed as an act of mercy to ship a culled cow from an auction, or directly from a farm on a long and dangerous journey to the kill pen.

Husbandry practices

According to Olivier Berreville, “Heifers are usually impregnated between 13 and 15 months of age and calve when they are approximately 2 years of age. Their calf is removed at birth and they are made to join the milking herd, (Berreville, 2014, page 193).

Again, according to The Code the aim of providing clean, sanitized, and low stress for the cow milking routines is to improve quantity and quality of milk. The Code lists recommendations only under ‘Milking’, not requirements. This means that it is left to the discretion of each producer as to which standards to follow and which to overlook when milking the cows. One of the points in The Code warrants closer analysis:

“f. avoid painful or stressful procedures (e.g. injections) in the milking parlor,” (The Code, page 35).

This point in The Code acknowledges that those in the livestock industry are fully aware that routine procedures such as disbudding, giving injections cause both pain and stress to dairy cattle.

While The Code recommends avoiding stressful procedures in the milking stall, it is common for cows in milking stalls to experience the removal of udder hair either through clipping or through the use of flames. Udder hair can trap dirt, bacteria, and manure. It is natural for cows to have hair on their udders. It does not cause an issue for young when suckling. However, udder hair interferes with the operation and cleanliness of robotic milking machines. Some producers use electric clippers to remove udder hair; however, this is time consuming and takes more skill than does singeing the hair with a flame. Therefore, for speed, producers are now tending to burn the hair off the udders with a flame. The Code cautions that “Improper use of equipment or technique may burn teat ends,” (The Code, page 36). However, there is no indication in The Code as to how to
treat such burns nor is there any mention of the consequences for the cow. Surely clipping or burning udder hair must be a stressful procedure particularly if the teat itself is burned in the process.

Cows on dairy farms have one purpose, and that is to produce milk. Milking the cow is not accomplished through a milking machine that is moved from cow to cow in a tie stall or through a robotic milking machine that a cow must be trained to enter. In either case, the machine is used. The machine does not sense or accommodate to the needs regarding pressure, or force of suction tolerated by each cow. Berreville cites many scientific studies which link teat infections, teat soreness, vascular damage to udder tissue, and mastitis to the use of commercial milking machines, (Berreville, 2014, pp 193-194).

Robotic milking machines have been proven to cause tremendous stress on dairy cattle:

“Robotic (or automatic) milking systems bring additional concerns and may be stressful to the animals. Cows’ vocalizations, elimination, and kicking behaviour when introduced to an automatic system suggest that the robotic milking equipment causes the animals to experience discomfort, stress, and/or fear (Siegford, & Jacobs n.d.). Wenzel, Schonreiter-Fischcher, and Unshelm (2003) found that cows milked using robotic systems kicked more frequently and had higher cortisol levels in their milk than those milked in traditional milking parlours. Further anticipation of entering the milking stall led to increased heart rates in the animals,” (Berreville, 2014, page 194).

Surveys of Canadian dairy farms with robotic milking machines revealed that 10 – 15% of cows in a herd resist entering a robotic milking stall. The surveys also revealed that as a response to this resistance, workers tend to use aggressive training techniques for at least 2 to 3 weeks in order to force cows to comply. Undercover investigations have revealed that workers use punches, kicks, steel bars, pitch forks, electric prods to the back, udder, face, and stomach of reluctant cows, (Berreville, 2014, page 194). It is not uncommon for cows to suffer painful electric shocks from stray voltage in and around robotic milking equipment.

In June of 2014 an undercover investigation by Mercy for Animal, Canada revealed the daily and frequent abuse experienced by dairy cattle at the Chilliwack Cattle Sales.

“Mercy for Animals Canada released undercover video last week, showing dairy cows being whipped and beaten with chains and canes, as well as punched and kicked, at Canada's largest dairy farm. It also showed cows suffering from open wounds and injuries, and being lifted by their chains with chains and tractors,” (CBC, 2014).

Eight of the employees were recorded beating cows in clear violation of animal protection laws. The investigator who brought the abuse to light complained to supervisors regarding inadequate training and abusive handling methods. However, no change was made to how employees handled the cattle and thus the abuse continued. The undercover investigator filmed the video and brought the case forward. The Chilliwack case is still before the courts, charges have just recently been laid. Seven employees and the owners of the Chilliwack dairy have been charged under the British Columbia Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, not under the Criminal Code which would bring much harsher penalties. Journalist, Élise Desaulniers of The Huffington Post observes that if the victims had been cats or dogs, the charges would have been laid under the Criminal Code and possibly involved incarceration. She notes that:

“Beyond this double standard that farm animals are the victims of, the problem remains that the abusive practices that lead to prosecution are not even necessarily the worst. Common industrial agriculture practices, despite their inherent cruelty, are perfectly legal. We don't need an undercover investigation to know that a large number of dairy cows spend their life chained, suffer from being separated from their calves shortly after birth, endure inflamed udders and bleeding hoofs, and inevitably end up at the slaughterhouse. In our society focused on productivity and profit, cows are treated as milk making machines for their entire, shortened lives. Yet there is widespread consent amongst experts that cows are as intelligent and sensitive as cats and dogs. In other words, the problem is not only the extreme abuse exposed every time an undercover investigation is conducted, but also generally accepted industry practices,” (Desaulniers, 2016).

Desaulniers has articulated both the ecofeminist critique of the exploitation of the cow’s female body and the despeciesist critique that while it is recognized that cows are intelligent, we tolerate generally accepted farming practices and a horrific animal abuse as is evidenced by the charges not being laid under the criminal code.

Another case of systematic and chronic dairy cattle abuse was investigated in New Mexico at Leprino Foods – the world’s largest producer of mozzarella cheese (Cronin, 2014). Several US states have ‘ag-gag’ laws which prohibit journalists and investigators from video-taping scenes within dairy farms, etc. New Mexico tried to pass such a law in 2013 and failed. Ag-gag...
laws arose in response to pressure from agriculture corporations seeking to silence whistleblowers rather than uphold humane standards of handling animals.

The continuous milking of the cow creates hormonal changes in the cow’s body so that she continues to produce milk even though her calf is gone. Milking a cow in a dairy tends to keep the cow producing milk for approximately 10 months at which time she runs out of milk. This is not economical for the producer who seeks to shorten the time when the cow is not producing milk. Therefore she is artificially impregnated 2 to 3 months after she has given birth. The cow’s well-being matters only insofar as her well-being serves the production of milk. A cow is therefore subjected to a continuous cycle of artificial insemination, birth, loss of her calf, lactation, artificial insemination again. She will not only be growing a new calf fetus inside her, but must continue to produce milk for the dairy for at least 7 months of each year. She is spent by the time she reaches 4 – 6 years of age.

Artificial impregnation is also a stressful and painful procedure for the dairy cow. The farm employee or veterinarian manipulates the cow’s vaginal area by inserting his arm through the cow’s rectum. The semen is then inserted into the cow’s vagina and deposited on the cervix; whereas, in nature the bull deposits the semen in the vagina, not as far as the cervix. The process is highly invasive and is not without potential for injury. Berreville cites studies that indicate the cow’s cortisol levels (stress indicator) is elevated during the procedure, (Berreville, 2014, page 187).

Artificial insemination serves the interest of people before the cows in a few ways. Artificial insemination where the semen is placed in the cervix reduces costs as less semen is required. A bull could damage a cow physically as dairy cows are often lack muscle mass to support a bull in mating. The bull must be removed from the farm and rotated with other bulls as the producer would not want to risk birth defects by having the bull inseminate his own offspring. With artificial insemination the bull does not have to be fed, housed, and cared for by the farmer.

An ecofeminist critique of the cycle of artificial insemination, removal of the calf at birth, milking the cow to remove 10 times the amount of milk her calf would naturally take links the exploitation of the female body with a capitalist patriarchal system. The cycle the cow is subject to uses the female reproductive ability but removes the calf the young created by the cow’s body, and diverts the mother’s milk to human use for profit. The despeciesist critique recognizes that the cow as ‘animal’ is debased even more fully than simply because she is female. The cow as animal is recognized as being capable of suffering pain and loss but is forced to endure trauma, enchainment, loss, painful procedures inflicted on her body nonetheless.

Transportation, Culling, and Slaughter:

The last two chapters of The Code are entitled “Transportation” and “Euthanasia”. The Codes cover provincial and territorial jurisdictions; while transportation and slaughter fall under federal regulations and are enforced by the CFIA. Therefore The Code is silent about the conditions on a transport trailer used to ship cows and is silent concerning the conditions at slaughterhouses. I have discussed transportation, culling, and slaughter under one heading in this paper as for the spent dairy cow the final journey from the farm to auction, collecting station, and slaughter has been proven to be particularly arduous and dangerous, (Paige, March 15, 2016). As such this part of the life of a dairy cow requires special consideration on our part so that we understand what these animals experience as they make that final journey towards death.

Dairy cows are often transported toward the end of their useful lives. This is when they are considered ‘spent’ due to lameness, age, infirmity – all conditions which would make enduring several days of trying to maintain her balance and safety in a crowded transport trailer very difficult. Some may think that a culling a lame cow or a cow with a condition not quite requiring euthanasia entails that a cow is slaughtered and at least ‘put out of her suffering’. However, this is not always the case. A culled cow may indeed be sold to slaughter directly, to a dealer who will transport her to a collecting station where she waits until more cattle are amassed, or to another producer who may see her as filling a need on his farm. With the use of rbST or bST in the US culled cow’s usage is extended.

According to Canadian regulations a cow must have food, water, and rest if she is going be transported for more than 52 hours (Health of Animals Regulations (C.R.C., c. 296)). This is a federal regulation enforced by the CFIA. The Health of Animals Regulations lists what transport personnel ‘should’ do in terms of keeping track of which animals are picked up when and from which locations. Note that these are recommendations only in terms of recording the time that each animal is in transit.

A passage from the Health of Animals Regulations states:

“Drivers should document:
• what they know of barn or yard conditions and loading procedures;
• weather and road conditions from loading to delivery; and
• transport time including:
  o start time of loading;
  o driving time, including breaks and rest stops; and
  o time of delivery,” (Chapter 12: Food Animal Humane Handling and Slaughter - Animal Welfare Requirements 12.3.1).

The trip from barn to slaughter may easily take more than 52 hours. This is acceptable according to the regulations as long as food and water are given after 52 hours. However, ensuring accountability for who is responsible for food and water for the cows is often overlooked. Consider the example of a cow being loaded onto a transport trailer and brought to an auction. The trip to the auction may take 12 hours. At the auction, the cow may be held for 24 hours, and then she is transported to another province in a transport trailer travelling for 18 hours. We are now at 54 hours – but the cow may not have had water and food at any of these stops along the way. She may have passed into several areas of responsibility – the auction, the truck driver, the second truck driver. She remains at each step on the way for under 52 hours. The total trip for cull cows from Atlantic Canada to Alberta where 90% of cull cows in Canada are slaughtered can be close to 2 weeks in length. CTV News recently aired a story citing Canada’s livestock transportation regulations as the worst in the Western World: (http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/canada-s-livestock-transportation-rules-worst-in-the-western-world-advocate-1.2820563). Agriculture Canada has agreed to review the current regulations and update them. The issue is also one of enforcement. With few staff and a large country to cover, enforcement of current regulations by the CFIA inspectors is often difficult.

In assisting producers on how to determine whether a cow is fit for transport, The Code acknowledges that transportation is stressful for all animals. In discussing how to determine whether compromised animals should be transported, the code cautions: “Never transport an animal unless you are sure it is healthy enough to handle the stress of the entire expected trip,” (The Code, page 37). The Code indicates that animals that have recently given birth are unfit for transport. However, through personal conversations with investigators, cows and their young with umbilical cords still adhering to them have been seen at livestock auctions throughout Canada on a regular basis. The Code also cautions that a cow who is pregnant and about to give birth not be transported. However, the extraction of fetal bovine serum for use in cell cultures in laboratories requires that a pregnant cow be transported to the slaughter plant so that the serum can be extracted from the heart of her fetus during the evisceration and blood is extracted via cardiac puncture without anaesthesia. However, there is now evidence of sensitivity to pain and resistance to anoxia in mammalian fetuses. In addition, although low blood oxygen levels in utero have been shown to suppress consciousness, there is emerging evidence that this suppression of conscious awareness is reversed on exposure to air. Therefore it is possible that lung inflation following removal from the uterus would expose fetuses to pain as they are bled out through cardiac puncture,” (http://3rs.ccc.ca/en/testing-and-production/tp-production/fetal-bovine-serum.html).

The Code does not address issues relating to how animals are treated livestock auctions nor to how they are treated at slaughter as The Code is written for dairy producers only. Their responsibility to the cow ends when the cow is loaded onto the transport truck. The only reference to death made in The Code is euthanasia on farm for compromised cattle. The Code lists euthanasia as a requirement when a cow is deemed to be unfit for transport or does not respond to treatment. It recommends euthanasia when a cow has a Body Condition Score (BCS) of under 2, is severely lame from hoof issues or leg/spine fractures, is a ‘downer’ (ie unable to stand), has an untreatable condition such as a hernia where the herniated tissue is touching the ground, has cancer, prolapsed uterus, (The Code, page 59).

When we review an investigative report from Animals Angels we can see that the enforcement of CFIA regulations regarding downer cows at auctions is not consistent. We can also see how the auction management staff, and veterinarians make decisions is often subjective and is not in accordance with the welfare concerns of the animal. Protection of the livestock auction’s reputation and the interest of the buyers seem to have come first in the case of Emily, a downer cow at a Manitoba auction in 2006.

In 2006 an investigator with Animals Angels went to a livestock auction in Manitoba. She observed a several severely lame cows and with other conditions for which, according to The Code, the cows should not have been transported. But here they
were, at the auction. They had arrived by transport and were to be bought, and loaded into another transport. The cows were emaciated with Body Condition Score of 1. They also had leg ulcers, broken legs, broken hooves, bilateral blindness, twisted guts, and udders in which the ligaments had become torn or weakened to the point where the udder was very close to the ground. These pictures can be found at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/cetfa/albums/72157617906053237 and https://www.flickr.com/photos/cetfa/albums/72157618421478878

One cow in particular appeared to be in extreme pain. The investigator’s attempts to purchase this cow in order to have her euthanized on site were met with scorn. The investigator learned that the buyer’s intention was to transport the cow to Ontario from Manitoba – a long a difficult journey and one for which she was clearly not able to survive. When she voiced concern over the cow’s condition and her unsuitability for transport she was intimidated by the management and employees of the auction. She was removed from the property and banned from re-entry. Her calls to the office of the provincial veterinary finally brought two veterinarians to the auction. The veterinarians euthanized the cow and confessed that they felt very powerless in these circumstances, (Francois, 2011).

From the auction a cull cow is often taken to a collecting station. Collecting stations are large paddocks holding 100’s if not 1000’s of cattle in crowded herds. They are often located in remote areas, and are highly secure with cameras and guards. I contacted animal investigators about collecting stations for cull cows in Canada and to the best of their knowledge there has not been a transparent investigation into any alleged abuses or neglect. From the auction or from the collecting station and cull cow is loaded onto a trailer and transported to the slaughter plant where they are unloaded into a kill line. Cows may be forced to wait for several hours in a kill line or in holding pens at the plant.

The regulations for federally registered slaughterhouses are established by the Government of Canada and are enforced by the CFIA, (Part B, Chapter 12). The steps for slaughtering a cow include: herding a cow down a chute to the kill box; positioning the cow’s head in the kill box in order to for the employee to position the captive bolt pistol to render the cow unconscious with the captive bolt; shackling and hoisting the cow; slitting her throat or ‘sticking’ her chest to ensure a bleed out that results in death. ‘Sticking’ involves using one to two knives to cut the main blood vessels in the cow’s chest. If the bleed out is insufficient, the cow will not die and will regain consciousness. According to the regulations set by the Government of Canada, if the cow regains consciousness the captive bolt stunning and slaughter of other cattle is to stop immediately. The slaughter line is not to restart until the cow in question is stunned again and the cause of the inappropriate initial stunning and return to consciousness of the cow are identified and rectified. Only trained personnel are to administer the captive bolt. The bolt used in Canadian slaughter houses is non-penetrating in that it does not penetrate the skull and kill the cow outright. If the bolt were to penetrate her brain, the material in the brain could then contaminate the blood and cause the meat to be not suitable for human consumption. Therefore, the bolt must be enough to stun the animal but not kill her through severe brain damage.

The Humane Slaughter Association of the United Kingdom (HSA) recommends that the maximum time from stunning to bleeding out should be 15 seconds in order to ensure the cow does not regain consciousness. However the HSA recognizes that given that fact that the slaughterhouse employee has to put the shackles on the cow and hoist her in the air, this is not reasonable. Therefore the HSA recommends that the time between the application of the bolt and bleeding out should be no more than 30 seconds when a stun captive bolt is used and 60 seconds when a penetrating captive bolt is used. Penetrating bolts are used when the cow is euthanized and not used for a means other than human consumption, (http://www.hsa.org.uk/bleeding-and-pithing/bleeding).

According to Canadian regulations, in order to be assessed as conscious the cow must be moving, vocalizing, or have eye movement. It is notable that in the CFIA’s Health of Animals Regulations (Part B, Chapter 12) the only mention that a cow may not be moving but still conscious is in reference to cows euthanized due to being a downer, or due to serious injury or illness at a lairage (a temporary holding place for cattle such as a livestock auction). Such cows are taken aside for euthanasia by means of a penetrative captive bolt which is applied to the skull to penetrate the brain. The CFIA regulations admit that a penetrative captive bolt may be ‘reversible’ in that a cow who has received the penetrative bolt may regain consciousness. The regulations require that either a staff member remain with the cow for 30 minutes and ensure she has is dead by observing the cessation of breath, lack of anal tone, etc.; sever the spinal cord at the brain stem; or bleed out through the thoracic cavity. Cows slaughtered for human consumption do not receive the penetrative captive bolt as such would cause brain tissue and possibly bacteria to enter the bloodstream and meat. Cows for human consumption receive a captive bolt that stuns but does not penetrate the brain. If it is possible for a penetrative captive bolt to leave a cow conscious and unmoving, one can see that the possibility that a stun level captive bolt could also leave a cow conscious and not moving.

The last steps of any sort of resistance or free movement a cow has in life is on the path to the kill box. Cows frequently try to turn around and flee at this point. It is their last chance. Employees often use electric prods to direct them through pain.
avoidance response towards the kill pen. The CFIA requires that prods not be used on the face, udders, or rectum. Within the CFIA's list of "Unacceptable Acts in Red Meat Slaughter" we find:

- "dragging or moving sensible (conscious) non-ambulatory or compromised animals;
- intentionally prodding an animal in a sensitive area (anus, genitalia, mammary glands, face) (MIR 62 [2]);
- repeated prodding of the same animal, regardless of the cause;
- intentional hitting or beating an animal with any implement that could cause injury;
- violent acts to move animals, such as breaking tails or grasping eyes;
- deliberately slamming gates on animals;
- deliberately stunning an animal and allowing it to recover;
- deliberate, multiple applications of a stunner that is obviously malfunctioning;
- hoisting, shackling, or scalding before the animal has been rendered insensible;
- failing to take immediate corrective action if an animal returns to sensibility on the line (MIR 79);
- dressing procedures commenced on an animal with any sign of sensibility;
- throwing or dropping of conscious animals;
- lifting or dragging animals by body parts;

The Unacceptable Acts in Red Meat Slaughter indicates that in Canada's livestock industry standards there is an awareness that the cow is sentient and may suffer horrific pain if any of the acts listed are performed. It would seem that it is at this point, when the cow is spent, that her welfare finally becomes a concern. In The Red Meat Condemnation Report by Species for Federally Regulated Plants, published by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, (2015) an average of 2.5 cattle of a total 2.5 million cattle were slaughtered with what the CFIA terms 'insufficient bleed out'. According to a lead animal rights investigator, the term 'insufficient bleed out' includes cows in whom the knife wounds were not sufficient to cause immediate bleed out and death as a result of the bleed out. Such cows are not dead when the slaughterhouse employees begin to slaughter them. However, as we see below, in the US we have qualitative evidence as provided by Gail Eisnitz (2007) and The Washington Post (2001) that many cows are still alive when dismembered – far more than the 2.5 cows per every 2.5 million. This would seem to point to a further research question: in countries that are so similar in economics, in livestock industrial practices, what is the actual number of cattle that are still conscious when dismembered? Is it actually as low as the Canadian statistics suggest, or is it as high as the qualitative evidence in the US seems to suggest? The fact that such questions must be posed is concerning. It would seem to suggest a lack of reporting in Canada, a significant difference in the handling of livestock in Canada vs the US, or a significant over reporting from various sources in the US. Clearly further research on the handling and attitudes towards livestock needs to be addressed.

Research into the Canadian experience has brought little data on the subject of dairy cow slaughter outside of what is provided by the Government of Canada through the Red Meat Condemnation Report cited above. This is a subject for future investigation and research from the perspective of how animals are treated, transparency of corporations running the slaughter facilities, as well as assessing the adequacy of government oversight through the CFIA.

According to discussions with lead investigators of animal rights abuses in Canada informants have come forward with regard to the conditions at slaughterhouses. However, to their knowledge no overall investigation by a non-governmental agency has been conducted regarding the conditions of cull cow slaughter in Canada. Slaughterhouse management is reluctant to talk about problematic occurrences on the kill floor. Slaughterhouses now have high levels of security and breaching such levels is highly difficult, dangerous, and illegal. Therefore, while we can recognize that this is a subject for further study, we can look to the situation in the US as well as to the situation regarding the slaughter of other species within Canada.

In her book, Slaughterhouse, Gail Eisnitz documents the conditions of American slaughterhouses:

"How often do these live animals get through the stunning process?" I asked.

"The way I look at it," White said, 'out of the 1228 beef I stuck today, it would have been okay if a few were still alive. But it's all day. Constantly, all day, I get live cattle," (Eisnitz, 2007, page 121).
According to Eisnitz, the slaughterhouse employees gave evidence that it is not unusual for several cows to be conscious when slaughtered. The captive bolt stops working, workers do not have time to increase the pressure within the mechanism of the captive bolt to ensure the cow is unconscious before shackling, bleed out, and the steps beyond bleed out on the slaughter line. There is an erroneous belief within the culture of US slaughter houses that if a cow is dead when her body begins to be cut up, she will not bleed out as well (Eisnitz, 2007, pp 117- 134). Eisnitz travelled extensively throughout the United States interviewing slaughter house employees and obtaining affidavits of their statements regarding working conditions.

Gail Eisnitz has provided detailed documented cases of conscious cows being slaughtered in the US. Canada and the US mirror each other in many ways in the livestock industry. In fact live animals and finished food products are regularly imported and exported across the border. Investigative reports regarding the processing of horses in Canadian slaughterhouses has revealed that horses have been slaughtered while still conscious (see: http://defendhorsescanada.org/chambers-of-carnage-investigation-of-bouvy-exports-richelieu-meats).


“The cattle were supposed to be dead before they got to Moreno. But too often they weren’t.
‘They blink. They make noises,’ he said softly. ‘The head moves, the eyes are wide and looking around.’
Still Moreno would cut. On bad days, he says, dozens of animals reached his station clearly alive and conscious. Some would survive as far as the tail cutter, the belly ripper, the hide puller. ‘They die,’ said Moreno, ‘piece by piece,’ (Warrick, 2001).

On October 11, 2014, the television show W5 aired a segment detailing the abuse of hogs at a livestock slaughter facility in Alberta. Mercy for Animals obtained footage of animal abuse by employees in clear violation of regulated standards while CFIA investigators stood by and did not intervene. The CFIA responded to this undercover investigation with a statement of their own which can be found at: CFIA Statement on Allegations of Inhumane Treatment of Animals at Alberta Facility, (The Statement). The Statement addresses the allegations that CFIA inspectors participated in animal abuse by: handing electric prods to workers; not intervening when pigs were overcrowded; contributing to pigs panicking; showing a lack of compassion for stressed pigs; and establishing an unprofessional and overly friendly relationship with employees. In The Statement the CFIA refers to the professional standards of their employees, acknowledges the need for more clarity of responsibilities; and addresses staff shortages and the sheer impossibility of maintaining a CFIA inspector at each slaughterhouse shift.

Currently oversight of slaughterhouses is provided by: the CFIA, internal whistleblowers on the slaughterhouse floor, and undercover investigators. Therefore, the only organized and regulated oversight is provided by the CFIA which is short staffed due to significant budget cuts in 2012 (Curry, 2012). In 2014 the Government of Canada appointed Inspection Verification Teams to oversee the inspection process. However, it is logistically impossible for the CFIA to fulfill its obligations regarding oversight. The CFIA has admitted that they are unable to fulfill their obligations of attending at each shift at federally regulated slaughterhouses in Canada, (The Statement). From this we may interpret that there is a sentiment that the handling of dairy cows and other livestock animals at slaughter is self-regulated by the processing plant itself for which maximizing profit may well be the guiding principle. The efficiency and ability of the CFIA to adequately inspect federally regulated slaughterhouses is a topic for further research. As there is no concrete evidence publically available regarding the conditions within a cattle slaughterhouse within Canada, I have considered research and evidence drawn from the experience of other species such as pigs and horses. I have also considered the research by Eisnitz and Warrick in the US.

This paper has followed the life events and living conditions of dairy cattle in Canada up to the fence of the slaughter house. At that point, the narrative ends. The CFIA provides

The events and conditions within Canadian cull cow slaughterhouses are topics for further research and transparency in the eyes of the general public. This would entail interviewing current and/or former slaughterhouse employees as well as CFIA inspectors and submitting Access to Information requests to the CFIA. Currently the government inspects these plants through the CFIA and the Government of Canada Inspection Verification Teams created in 2014.

When we look at the processes of transporting a cow to an auction, a collecting station, and to slaughter through the lens of a despeciessist critique, we can see that contradictory attitudes expressed in the regulations and in observations. At times her welfare of is concern and she seems to have a sense of protection as a being that is sentient. We see this in the List of Unacceptable Acts. At other times she is just a marketable object being transferred from one point to another. A cow in transport has little protection in Canada. She is moving closer and closer to becoming a mere object, figuratively and literally as the transport truck heads towards the slaughterhouse. The review of transportation and slaughter reveals the complexity of
our view of dairy cattle as a society. On the one hand we seek her protection from harm, on the other she is a mere commodity whose products such as milk, veal, and beef we enjoy. When we recognize her sentience but still subject her to long and injurious transport trailer trips as well as to the horrors of slaughter, we debase her to become something worse than an object. An object such as a computer is not sentient; therefore, we can cut it up without regard to what it experiences. When we refer to a cow as ‘objectified’ or as an ‘object’ there may be a tendency to assume that the cow is non-sentient. However, our societal practices reveal that we recognize the cow’s sentience and yet know, allow, and even encourage through the purchases we make those acts that create vast suffering for her. We seem to grind her alive for her entire life. In his book, Bleating Hearts, Mark Hawthorne quotes Jonathon Safran Foer: “These factory farmers calculate how close to death they can keep the animals without killing them,” (Hawthorne, 2013, page 6, kindle edition).

Emergent Themes Regarding the Life of a Dairy Cow

I will now turn to discussing emergent themes regarding the life of a dairy cow and apply an ecofeminist despeciesist critique.

Objectification of cows’ bodies and individuality:

Each cow is an individual with preferences regarding forage, housing, movement, places to roam. Each cow has a specific place in her relationship to her herd and her relationship to her familial group (Hatkoff, 2009). Cows frequently call out to their young when their calves are removed. One story by a licensed veterinarian relates how a cow who had twins and purposefully hid one of her calves, (Cross, 2012). A slaughterhouse employee in the US told an undercover animal rights activist that cows miss their babies, “they miss them, they know, they mourn for them,” (personal conversation with animal rights investigator). The veterinarian who observed the cow protecting her young, the slaughterhouse employee who recognized that cows know and miss their young both recognize that cows are subjects with agency. The livestock industry removes the subjecthood of cows through the intersecting processes of mutilation of the cow’s body, fragmentation of their social groups, and objectification. Mutilation, fragmentation, and objectification intersect as in order to mutilate or fragment someone, the one doing the mutilation or fragmentation sees the cow as an object. In turn, mutilation and fragmentation confirm and reinforce objectification.

The process of objectification begins prior to birth as sex of the calf can be guaranteed. While sexed semen is not widely used as of now in Canada, it does allow a producer to know whether a male or female calf will be born and the expected date of birth. Thus the farmer can plan his farming business around this knowledge. A cow’s destiny is determined prior to birth. If we think of factory farmers as planning their herd population we might also conclude that a cow’s destiny is determined prior to actual conception – when money has changed hands for the insemination process.

Upon birth the objectification through fragmentation and mutilation continues. A calf is separated from his/her mother and experiences family fragmentation which is measurably stressful (Berreville, 2014). He or she experiences mutilations of disbudding/dehorning, castration for males to become steers, and the identity fragmentation and further physical mutilation of ear tagging. If the calf is female and matures to be a dairy cow she will also experience extra teat removal, and the singeing or clipping of udder hair. The cow who has endured these mutilations is less of an individual with characteristics that serve her purpose – such as hair to sense environment, and provide protection from elements; horns for protection and as the body’s way of eliminating metabolic waste through growing horn material; and healthy teats for nursing young.

The cow’s body is further objectified by the way in which the livestock industry views and treats her health concerns. As we saw with ketosis, mastitis, and low Body Condition Score, serious health challenges are caused by over use of the cow, a diet that promotes high milk yields to the detriment of the cow’s health. The treatment of mastitis is provided only in so far as milk production continues unabated. If the farmer gives the cow antibiotics, then her milk must not be put in the holding tank for human consumption. It must be disposed of separately. Their milk used as long as the cow is producing and bacteria levels are acceptable. As an object the pain the cow experiences from ketosis, mastitis and low Body Condition Score is irrelevant to the dairy industry. Her pain is unacknowledged by the industry because she is an object. Through using her to produce milk to the very limit of her health, she becomes an object.

As noted above, while The Code requires producers to use pain control for disbudding, dehorning, extra teat removal, and castration; studies have shown that the majority of producers do not use such analgesics or sedatives for these procedures (Berreville, 2014; Vasseur etal., 2012). By not using pain control the producer further objectifies and either denies that the cow experiences pain, or he might recognize that the cow experiences pain and choose to dominate her in such a way that pain control is purposely withheld. It is not that her sense of pain is ignored or denied; indeed, the producer must use physical and forceful restraints when dehorning, disbudding, teat removal and castration. From a despeciesist approach we can suggest that
the producer here objectifies the animal as ‘the other’ over which he is completely powerful. If she did not struggle, did not feel pain, his power over her would be reduced. Without her pain, there would be no conflict, no distinction of place in the hierarchy of being. This sequence of mutilations endured by cows is predicated on a speciesist paradigm that posits beings in a hierarchy with humans at the apex, and non-human animals below them. Such a paradigm assumes that the beings below humans exist for their use and exploitation only whether they have consciousness, an emotional life, and sentence or not. Of course, the ultimate mutilation of the cow’s body occurs at slaughter. After her death further objectification of the cow occurs when we use such terms as ‘milk’, ‘cheese’, ‘meat’, ‘hamburger’, ‘steak’, ‘roasts’, etc. Carol J Adams uses the term ‘the absent referent’ to refer to the individual non-human animal who has been converted through slaughter and cognitive distancing into ‘meat’, or ‘chops’, ‘steak’, etc. Adams writes:

“Without a referent point of the slaughtered, bleeding, butchered animal, meat becomes a free-floating image. Meat is seen as a vehicle of meaning and not as inherently meaningful; the referent ‘animal’ has been consumed. ....Our minds move from objectified being to consumable food. The action of fragmentation, the killing, and the dividing is elided. Indeed patriarchal culture surrounds actual butchering with silence. Geographically slaughterhouses are cloistered. We do not see or hear what transpires there. Consequently consumption appears to follow immediately upon objectification, for consumption itself has been objectified,” (Adams 1999, 48-9).

Adams acknowledges Willard Quine’s usage of the phrase ‘mass term’ and the work of Nancy Tuana when she notes that:

“Mass terms refer to things like water or colors; no matter how much you have of it, or what type of container it is in, water is still water.... When we turn an animal into “meat”, someone who has a very particular situated life, a unique being, is converted into something that has not distinctiveness, no uniqueness, no individuality. When you add five pounds of hamburger to a plate of hamburger, it is more of the same thing, nothing has changed. But if you have a living cow in front of you, and you kill that cow, and butcher that cow, and grind up her corpse, you have not added a mass term to a mass term and ended up with more of the same,” (Adams, 1995, page 27).

The objectification of animals is complete when the individual is reduced to the mass terms of milk, cheese, meat, beef, or hamburger. The selfhood, the sentience, of each animal that makes up the plate of meat or the class of milk or slice of cheese is denied. The individuality of each individual cow and each of those in her matrilineal line is hidden in the hamburger, the glass of milk, cream for coffee, ice cream for our pleasure. One animal activist recalled witnessing a slaughterhouse employee throwing the remains of his McDonald’s hamburger to a dairy cow and saying “Here, have a burger, burger”. Slaughterhouse employees often recognize the sentience of cows, (Eisnitz, 2007).

Carol J. Adams writes: “Terminal animals – animals who exist to become someone’s ‘meat’ or ‘model’ - have been stripped of all that makes them individuals, as Barbara Noske observes, they have been de-animalized. We fail to view terminal animals as social creatures,” (Adams, 1995, page 57). I would add that when we analyze The Code, The Health of Animals Regulations, as well as regular industry handling practices the objectification of cows entails the recognition that while cows are sentient it is normal and permissible to inflict pain and suffering on them when such pain and suffering serve society’s purposes of food and economics.

If we follow the body of the cow into restaurants, we find a strange dimension to this process of objectification. The individual life of the cow is reaffirmed for consumers. Restaurants remind consumers that we are ingesting animals that were once whole beings. This objectification is reinforced through every day pictures and cartoons we commonly see in restaurants. The socialization of the process to objectify animals occurs when as part of advertising or restaurant décor a whole living animal is portrayed and then juxtaposed beside either the picture of the mass term or at least the presence of eating of the mass term is implied as immanent. See the following picture taken from Swiss Chalet’s facebook page:

The cow in this Swiss Chalet ‘cartoon’ is confused and ignorant looking. Her eyes are close set, her expression is bewildered and her udder is full. Notice that she is bony as her hip bones are sharp. Her species is equated with craziness by the made up word ‘cow-azy’. The cow is not absent, we are reminded in looking at this picture that the beef and dairy products served at Swiss Chalet are from an actual animal. But we are socialized to ridicule that animal and such ridicule allows for further
objectification of her. See also the following screen shot taken by the author of a Facebook page for The Cow and Sow restaurant in Fenelon Falls, Ontario, Canada:

Not only does the name of the restaurant remind the diners that they are ingesting the bodies of actual animals, the depiction of the cow and the sow is saucy, funny, and cute. The cow’s face is under the word ‘eatery’ and she is winking. The hind end of the animals is depicted as fleshy and sexualized. The picture elides the suffering experienced by individual animals consumed at the restaurant as meat. This is another example of how we reinforce the objectification of animals through a speciesist paradigm. Those who dine at the restaurant or walk by are reminded through the name of the restaurant and the characterizations of the animals that they are consuming individual animals. But these animals are ridiculed by their cartoon like images. If they are ridiculed then their suffering is obliterated. These messages are also reinforced with the concept that eating ridiculed animals is “Great Food and Great Fun!” The message is: ‘know that you are eating individual animals and enjoy eating them’. No mention is made of the long and painful journey from the barnyard to the plate. While the mass term such as ‘meat’ is part of the speciesist paradigm that seeks to deny that people are eating individual animals that had agency and a sense of yearning for their young, the pictorial references to actual individual degraded and cartoon animals at these restaurants celebrates the hegemonic speciesist paradigm of victory over the subjugated and objectified animal. The ridicule of livestock animals in restaurants justifies their subjugation and exploitation. The retail exploitation of the cow as a mass term and the objectification and confinement of the cow on the farm support and strengthen the speciesist paradigm from which these behaviours originate.

The cow’s destiny is determined by his/her use: as a veal calf, a steer, a heifer, a future dairy cow. Each potential role is defined by human and thus speciesist need. The normal life expectancy of a cow that is not used in the livestock industry is within the range of fifteen to twenty years (Baur, 2008, page 118). Dairy cattle are often culled and slaughtered at four to six years of age in Canada, and one to two years of age in the United States. They are babies in bodies aged by human use.

Intersection of Material Culture and the Objectification of Dairy Cattle:

When we apply a despeciesist analysis to how the cow is housed, we see that further objectification of the cow is achieved through the material culture of barns, auctions, collecting stations, trailers, and slaughterhouses. The cows are housed and divided according to their use for people. They are confined and only permitted to go outside on rare occasions according to the convenience of the producers. Living in dairy area of rural Ontario a trip by a dairy farm shows a barn, round bales outside, a manure pile, but no animals. Many dairy farms lack large fenced paddocks and lack perimeter fences. There is no need for such fencing as the cows are not permitted to go outside. Occasionally one might see a small muddy manure ridden paddock, of approximately 75 m x 75 m. If any cows are seen, they are thin. Sometimes the dry cows permitted to go outside into these small muddy barnyards as they are not being milked currently. A trip through the Ontario countryside does not reveal dairy cows on pasture. The material culture of barns: ie rooms divided for human convenience, not for cows needs; the confinement in spaces that suit human needs, tying cows, forced separation, cows standing for prolonged periods of time – all are indicative of a speciesist paradigm. The material culture itself affects the human’s handling and how they perceive the cows: they become units to be used and warehoused. They become things.

Foucault realized that architecture is political in the sense that architecture reflects the intention of the powerful (Foucault Reader, page 239). In terms of the livestock industry, the architecture of barns, of confinement systems, of livestock auctions, trailers, chutes in slaughter houses, the killing floor reflects the speciesist political power of people over animals. The material culture of these confinement systems expresses the human’s need for control and for seeing the animal as a subordinate subject to human power and control. We can extend Foucault’s analysis of prisons to the material culture of non-human animal containment and transportation systems:
Livestock auctions are an example of the panopticon level of control. The cattle are brought in shipped in livestock trailers where they are crowded together. They are prodded with canes and herded off the trailers, through chutes and into pens where they are also crowded with no room to turn or lie down. Contrary to regulations, they are often without food, water, or shelter from weather conditions. They may endure this for days, they are then prodded or hit to encourage them to move through a series of chutes leading to the auction ring where they are moved, again through being tapped with a cane/paddle, in front of potential bidders, then they are shooed out into another pen before further tapping/hitting/prodding onto another trailer to their destination. I have witnessed several instances of unnecessary but continuous hitting of cattle at auctions. The cow is moving in the direction she is to go at a pace that is appropriate and yet the auction employee continues to hit her on her bony hips. At some of the larger auction centres the public can view the cattle and other animals for sale by walking over them on a series of catwalks. The picture below, taken by the author, is from the Ontario Livestock Exchange, Cookstown, ON in August of 2015:

This picture provides us with the sense of the panopticon at a livestock auction in the area where the cows are held prior to being brought into the ring. Here we can see spent dairy cows crowded in a few pens while several pens close by are vacant. All animals were at auction by this time. We can wonder why they were not permitted to have more space by some being moved into the vacant pens. We can also see that several of the cows are fairly thin, with ribs, hip bones clearly visible even in this grainy photograph taken at a height of approximately 25 feet. At auctions cows are prodded or hit to move into the auction ring. The auctioneer and bidders sit above in a panopticon and look down at the cows as they move trying to preserve themselves by avoiding the person with the paddle. The design of the auction ring is emblematic of the speciesist paradigm where humans are at the apex and cows exist only as means for our ends. The material culture of the auction furthers the objectification of the cow by removing her individuality. They are auction lot numbers weighing a stated number of pounds sold to a bidder who also has a number. The material culture of barns, auctions, transportation trailers affects the humans handling the animals and encourages the speciesist attitude and beliefs. Carol J Adams refers to the material culture of buildings used to confine animals:

“Just as the dominant language denies them individuality, the institutions created to hold them while alive deny them the opportunity to make expressive gestures that characterize and give meaning to individual lives. Pigs cannot root; chickens cannot peck; calves cannot nurse. These activities do not fit into profit requirements. In essence we are to view the living animal as though already dead, already a mass term.” (Adams, 1995 page 28).

The material culture of the buildings, trucks, abattoirs is designed for human exploitation of animals and also to de-individualize them, to take away from them those behaviours that are innate. The confinement systems remove the possibility that animals express their innate behaviours that define them as chickens, pigs, cows, and as mothers. Recall that The Code recommends that animals be housed in such a way as to express ‘innate behaviours’ (The Code, page 5). Recall also Karen Davis’ observation that when we see animals in a factory farm setting we disengage from any sense of empathy regarding their suffering. Humans confine, mutilate and remove the calves from dairy cattle and thus make it impossible for a cow to behave in a way that expresses her innate behaviours such as moving, nursing her young, and remaining with her familial group. In this way we remove the selfhood and the individuality of each animal through a speciesist paradigm. While Temple Grandin, professor of animal science at Colorado State University, works as a consultant to the livestock industry in order to make the slaughter
process less stressful for the animals, her work supports the speciesist perception that animals exist for humans to use as they wish (Grandin, 1996, 2001, 2013).

Transportation toward Objectification

In Canada it is legal to transport cattle without food or water for up to 52 hours according to The Code. However, the cows may spend under 52 hours at each of the locations as they are moved from barn to slaughterhouse. As long as they are moved on, the producer, auction house management, truck driver is often not held accountable. They may endure transportation without rest for a period beyond 52 hours. However, the recommendations established by Canada’s National Farm Animal Care Council are very specific with respect to dairy cattle as the following table indicates:

| 8.3.2 | Transporting cull cows in adverse weather conditions is a special concern. These cows may be unfit for transportation due to poor body condition, age or infirmity, and lack of acclimatization to cold weather. Producers should be aware that these cows are at risk of developing complications during transport. Such cows should be culled and shipped before becoming high risk animals. If suitable for transport, such cows may be taken directly to the closest abattoir, or, in extreme cases should be euthanized on farm. |
| 8.3.3 | Calving is a natural phenomenon and as such the timing cannot be precisely predicted. Consideration should be given to curtailing long distance travel during expected calving time and immediately thereafter. |
| 8.3.4 | Calves should be loaded only into vehicles that are clean and disinfected and that contain suitable fresh bedding material. Bob calves should not be bedded in shavings or sawdust because if they ingest this type of bedding material they will experience digestive problems. |
| 8.3.5 | Dairy cattle of substantially different sizes should be segregated (see Section 4.3, Segregation). |
| 8.3.6 | Devices used to tether dairy cattle must be removed immediately if they restrict breathing or otherwise cause discomfort to the dairy cattle. |
| 8.3.7 | Milking cattle should not be deprived of feed and water for longer than 12 hours. |
| 8.3.8 | Cull dairy cattle in transit require more space on a per animal weight basis than equivalent weight beef cattle. Dairy type cows in good body condition require about 10% more space than an equivalent weight beef cow and thin dairy cows can require up to 25% more space than an equivalent weight beef animal. Refer to the beef maximal loading density chart (Figure 3) and make the appropriate adjustment for hauling groups of cull dairy cows. |

The above are not regulations. They are simply recommendations regarding transportation of dairy cattle. We can note the use of the word ‘should’. The recommendations encourage handlers to rest and provide feed and water to milking cattle every 12 hours; and non-milking dairy cattle every 48 hours, and make special provision for the frailty of cull dairy cows. One can often see frail dairy cows at auctions. They are clearly not transported directly to slaughter. The Health of Animals Regulations lists only the requirement regarding rest at 52 hours if the initial and final destinations are within Canada, (Health of Animals Regulations, 2015). The requirements of this act remain silent regarding accommodating trailer cull dairy cows. Thus we see that it is recommended that livestock transport personnel consider each cow as an individual to determine whether she has special needs; not a requirement.

The requirements reduce them to a mass term: cows, livestock. The recommendations of The Code and the requirements of The Health of Animals with respect to cull cow transport set a standard of sorts to protect profits and animal welfare to some degree. However, the reality of cull cow transport is revealed in a recent study by Carolyn Kehler the findings of which have been published in the Manitoba Cooperator. Kehler recorded the condition of cull cows before and after transport to slaughter. She found that there were torn udders, significant increase in bruising with 17% of the cattle having significant bruising after transport. She found a correlation between increased bruising and increased wait times at slaughter. Her purpose in studying the effects of transportation on cattle is given as being “important for economics as well as animal welfare, (Paige, March 15, 2016). Note that economic concerns are listed before animal welfare concerns.

An earlier article in the Manitoba Cooperator features a CFIA veterinarian, Dr Max Popp, warning livestock producers to pay attention to animal welfare while in transit. His concerns focus around economics, animal welfare, and the public’s perception: “‘Cattle hide their pain so that they don’t look vulnerable to predators. Keep that in mind when monitoring your herd,’ said Max Popp, CFIA animal health district veterinarian, western area operations,” (Paige, February 23, 2016).

How can we interpret the disparity between the standards set out in writing and Kehler’s findings and the reasons for Dr Popp’s warnings? Slaughterhouse employees, inspectors at slaughter would have seen the bruising and the physical trauma to the
animals upon arrival at slaughter. Is it that there is an attitude of not being bothered; of thinking that what the cows experience does not matter? Is there a sense of complacency of ‘that’s the way things have always been’. Or is there a deeper sense that if employees and government inspectors showed genuine concern by taking action about the conditions of cows upon arriving at slaughter, then would they be able to justify the acts of stunning, shackling, bleeding out, and cutting up the cow? Is overlooking the conditions of cows upon arrival at slaughter accomplished not only through further objectification but in order to assist in even great objectification in order to conduct the acts associated with slaughter?

**Exploitation of the Female Body**

The ecofeminist and despeciesist critiques coalesce in analyzing how the dairy cow experiences exploitation as a female. Recall that the dairy cow is selected because of her female gender. She is impregnated against her will through a painful and invasive artificial insemination. After a 9 month gestation period she gives birth; her calf is removed within hours of birth; and her milk is then diverted for human consumption. After 2 – 3 months the cow is impregnated again and this cycle of: birth, removal of her calf, and being milked is repeated. During this time, her body condition deteriorates as milking and bearing repeated young depletes her. She can become extremely lame through standing in manure, urine, and not moving; she may also develop mastitis, ketosis, and/or pneumonia. At four to six years she is considered to be spent, a cull cow. In the US rbST or bST hormones are often used to extend her milking period and quantity. Her use is of value to the farmer/producer only because she is female and because she is a cow. A Facebook post from the Canadians for the Ethical Treatment of Farmed Animals (CETFA) which captures both the patriarchal and speciesist nature of the dairy industry:

An ecofeminist critique of the dairy industry recognizes that a cow is exploited for human consumption because she is female, gives birth, and produces milk. Her body and that of her offspring are edible. The despeciesist critique recognizes that a cow is exploited because she is considered to be lower hierarchically than humans. To paraphrase Jeremy Bentham: It is not a question of whether she suffers or feels pain; we know that she does.

*The Code* reveals an awareness by the livestock industry that a cow suffers pain as is shown by the recommendation that analgesics be used for disbudding. Berreville cites scientific evidence that the cow is stressed by removal of her calf, (Berreville, 2014) and that by the age of 5 she is fragile before her time. Dr Melanie Joy suggests that humans continue to eat meat and exploit animals because to do so is “normal, natural, and necessary,” (Joy, 2010). She uses the term ‘carnism’ to describe the acceptance of meat eating as an accepted aspect of day to day life that we tend not to question. This is part of the reason perhaps and certainly the main reason for people who have neither reflected nor researched the culturally accepted centrality of meat and dairy in Western diets. However, I think there are deeper reasons for such exploitation. The despeciesist approach suggests that the reasons the cow is exploited are because cows and other non-human animals are seen as hierarchically inferior to humans and as such can be used according to human’s wishes and desires. This concurs with the finding sof this paper with regard to the intersection of objectification, confinement, and mutilation of dairy cows.

**Cows of the Future: Shifting understanding**

The *Animal Welfare Act of Ontario* 2008 excludes livestock animals from protections bestowed upon companion animals. The private members’ bill C-246 *Modernizing Animal Protections Act* written and recently introduced to the Canadian Parliament by Nathaniel Erskine-Smith in 2016 introduces the discussion of animals as persons in the parliamentary arena. While livestock animals still appear to be excluded from protection by this proposed legislation, truck drivers in whose trailers animals become injured, heat exhausted, or frost bitten may face criminal charges. This is an introduction at the level of parliament of livestock animals as having rights to freedom from pain.

A new industry driven initiative called proAction has been developed in response to consumer pressure. Among other things, tail docking will be banned in Canada after September 2017, *(Better Farming, 2016)*. The purpose of proAction is listed as “To farmers offer proof to their customers that they work to ensure milk quality and safety, and to continually improve animal health and welfare as well as environmental stewardship,” (Mann, 2016). While cows may still endure other mutilations such
as extra teat removal, and males may still be castrated without anesthetics, this is a beginning. However, the exploitation of the female body of the cow will continue as will the denigration of her existence because she is an animal. Initiatives such as proAction recognize that consumers are paying attention. Mann specifically refers to the negative consumer response to dairy after the investigation at the Chilliwack BC dairy as a catalyst in moving proAction forward. The proAction initiative is the dairy industry’s way of responding to consumers’ framing of the dairy industry as inherently cruel. When we look more deeply into the changes advocated by proAction we see that in terms of animal welfare, there are no changes other than banning tail docking. The other area of animal welfare addressed by proAction is to establish a structure to assess dairy farmers’ adherence to the requirements listed in The Code. Dairy producers should be adhering to the requirements regardless. Furthermore if the Trans Pacific Partnership is ratified, dairy products from the US will be available in Canada and proAction will have no authority over the production of that milk. ProAction is a speciesist response by the dairy industry to secure its market share.

These initiatives on each side the ‘barn door’ show a continued interaction between those who see animals as subjects with agency and inherent rights and those who see animals as objects with very minimal rights which are granted by humans.

Concluding Remarks

The scope of this paper is an analysis of the daily treatment and life events of a dairy cow in Canada. Further research applying a despeciest critique might explore why humans continue to exploit cows once we know they suffer and endure pain in order for humans to experience cream, milk, ice cream, yoghurt even when we know there are plant based alternatives to dairy available. Such research may explore whether there is a process of distancing in which people engage in order to belong to their social group where the majority continue to consume meat and dairy; or whether there is a sense of power derived from consuming what is ontologically seeing ‘the other’ particularly when that ‘other’ is highly controlled, confined, and subdued.

Carolyn Merchant identifies the rise of the scientific method, the patriarchy, and capitalism with the mechanical view of nature such that humans are positioned on the top of the hierarchy of beings and can subjugate and exploit those below using mechanistic practices to extract from those below the highest amount of use and profit (Merchant, 1980). Carol J. Adams expands on Merchant’s work and identifies the sexualization and subjugation of animals and women as a pornographic like urge for power over the weak that fuels the meat and dairy industries. John Sanbonmatsu identifies speciesism as the “‘primordial’ substructure or organizing principles of the human project, the determining episteme and habitus of every human culture, economy, and society,” (Sanbonmatsu, 2014, page 31). For Sanbonmatsu, speciesism is embedded in the human mind existentially. Merchant, Adams, and Sanbonmatsu all present further theories and research questions as to why humans continue to exploit animals for food particularly when they are aware of suffering.

When we consider the normalized treatment of farm animals such as dairy cows, we can reflect on the assumed paradigms behind such treatment. Nibert observes that the phrase ‘farm animal’ is socially constructed and thus allows us to tolerate and justify the exploitation of and harsh treatment accorded to farm animals. Other socially constructed terms that support the hegemonic abuse of farm animals are ‘livestock’ and ‘heads of cattle’. Our language supports the objectification of cows and through that objectification normalizes mutilations, confinement, a lifespan that is one quarter the norm as a result of extremely harsh treatment and living conditions. At the same time The Code, and The Health and Animal Welfare Act contain text that clearly indicates and awareness that animals suffer pain and feel stress.

The livestock industry’s position that animals such as cows feel stress, and suffer pain; but nonetheless, can still endure mutilations, removal of their young and the separation from familial groups, long transport journeys, the kill pen, and the process of slaughter from stun box to bleeding out is based on assumptions indicating a paradigmatic view through which the livestock industry and its supporters view the animals. These assumptions include:

- The suffering of cows is a meaningless concept.
- The suffering of animals is irrelevant.
- Cows do suffer somewhat, but that suffering does not matter because most of the time they are content and well cared for by those in the livestock industry. This assumption is based on the belief that cows have one or two bad days such as when their calves are removed at birth and when they are slaughtered but the rest of their lives are spent in contentment.
- While cows may attempt to run from the robotic milking machines, transport trucks, the auction pens and the kill pen, they obey when prodded or directed; therefore, they are content.
- Cows and other livestock are not intelligent. They do not think. Therefore they serve human’s purposes, their suffering does not matter.

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- Cows and other livestock have no sense of death or dying. They do not have self-reflexivity. Therefore it is acceptable to kill them for meat.
- Cows and other livestock forget their young after a day or two. Therefore, taking their young away at birth is acceptable.
- Cows and other livestock do not have a sense of self-identity; therefore, they do not mind the treatment they receive such as disbudding, dehorning, calf removal, artificial insemination, etc.
- While cows may show resistance to treatments such as disbudding, teat removal, removal of their calf, the kill pen, their actions are automatic. They don’t think like humans; therefore, the cow’s actions to avoid these treatments are irrelevant.
- Mistakes may happen in the slaughterhouse; but, these do not happen often or matter. The cows will be dead soon enough.
- Livestock handlers, dairy workers, and slaughterhouse workers do due diligence to ensure humane practices are followed. There may be a few abusive workers in the industry; but, the authorities will look after them. Essentially dairy farming is very humane to cows.
- Dairy farmers care about their cows.
- Humans require meat and dairy for our health. Humans’ health needs are more important than the suffering of animals.
- It is traditional to consume meat and dairy. Questioning tradition uproots society.
- Our economy is based on consuming meat and dairy. Recognizing that cows and other livestock have inherent rights will ruin the economy. We cannot change.
- A culled cow is of no more use for dairy; therefore it is humane to ship her to slaughter her and not waste her body.
- Profit and economics are the number one priority. The need to look after profits ensures that the farmer, livestock personnel, and the slaughterhouse employees will look after the cow properly.

Behind these assumptions lie deeper underlying paradigmatic speciesist assumptions such as:

- Humans determine whose suffering is relevant based upon a constructed idea of what benefits us in terms of our comfort, traditions, profit, belief system, and our perceived needs or desires regarding the ontological hierarchy of beings.
- It is morally correct to frame some animals as less deserving of protections than others. Human beings determine the standard by which this framing is carried out according to our comfort level, traditions, profit, belief system, and our perceived needs or desires.
- Cows and other livestock animals are lesser ontologically and exist for humans to use in the food industry as they see fit. Their existence is only in reference to our needs. Therefore their suffering as individuals is irrelevant.
- Humans existentially seek out the subjugation of the ‘other’ in order to feel secure in the universe, (Sonbanmatsu, 2014).

This paper has followed the life events of dairy cows in the livestock industry in Canada based on, The Code, The Health of Animals Regulations, newspaper and web articles, as well as personal observations. While analyzing these sources using an ecofeminist despeciesist critique, I acknowledge that each source is interpreted through one’s own paradigmatic lens. In some instances I have quoted sources at length in order to provide the reader with sufficient text to arrive at his/her own interpretation. In the analysis I have endeavoured to maintain close adherence and study the actual diction, meaning, and phrasing of the texts and observed interactions. This study has uncovered a paradigmatic view of animals that raises questions as to the ethics of using dairy cattle as they are currently used given recent scientifically based studies and day to day observations of animal behaviour made by those connected to the livestock industry. These findings would seem to suggest further areas of research such as how do we define the ethics in the relationship between humans and non-human animals.
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