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An Analysis of Commercial Livestock Truck Accidents in Canada & the United States: *A Report to Improve the Care of Livestock in Transport*

Calgary, AB, October 31, 2007: Alberta Farm Animal Care's (AFAC) mandate is to seek ways to continuously improve animal care. This includes the care of livestock while in transport. This report analyses commercial livestock trucking accidents to better understand how to reduce accidents and it provides recommendations.

Most people assume bad weather is the main cause of rollover accidents involving livestock trucks. However, data collected by Jennifer Woods, a livestock consultant from Blackie Alberta, underscores that common belief is not true. She collected data showing **fatigue** has been a major factor in a high percentage of truck accidents.

Jennifer tabulated the results of **415 commercial livestock truck accidents** in Canada and the United States from between 1994 and June 2007. She collected data from Alberta (AFAC) incident reports with information coming from insurance companies, police and fire departments and trucking companies and from Google internet searches and unpublished industry sources.

Results show that:

- 59% of the accidents occurred during the early morning hours from midnight to 9:00 am;
- 80% involved a single vehicle;
- Driver error was blamed for 85% of the accidents;
- In 83% of the accidents, the vehicle rolled over;
- 84% of the trucks rolled to the right;
- Only 1% of the reports identified weather conditions as the cause of the accident and the winter months did not record the highest number of accidents;
- More accidents happened in October, followed by November, August, April and May.
- 56% of all accidents involved cattle trucks; 27% involved pigs and 11% poultry;
- Of the 169 documented cattle accidents, 23% involved trucks hauling fed beef while 70% involved feeders and calves;
- Of the 103 documented swine accidents, 80% involved trucks hauling market hogs, 16% involved feeder or weaner pigs and 3% involved sows.

The conclusion is that driver fatigue is the leading cause of these accidents. This is based on the fact that the majority of accidents occurred between midnight and 9:00 a.m., that the majority of the accidents were single vehicle accidents where the truck rolled on the right hand side and that driver error was found to be the most common cause of accidents.

Hundreds of thousands of animals are moving on our highways daily and accidents are inevitable. Unlike other freight carriers though, these trailers are carrying live animals, making these accidents an increasing public concern. As well as a livestock welfare issue, there is a large cost associated with these accidents; the loss of the value of the animal, the cost of rescue and recovery, the loss of equipment and the increase in insurance cost.

Transportation is a vital link for the livestock industry and it is the responsibility of the entire livestock industry to ensure that animals are being transported safely and humanely. Transporters need to be provided the necessary tools to educate and train drivers on accident prevention. Fatigue management is a key to accident reduction.

This paper will be shared with Certified Livestock Transporter (CLT) trainers and Alberta's trucking industry. This paper was reviewed by Dr. Temple Grandin who summarized it in an article for Meat and Poultry Magazine (Oct 10/07) and submitted it for publication to the journal, Veterinaria Italiana.

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