

Transportation Fitness: Focus on Penis Injury



A Fact Sheet for the Canadian Cattle Industry

The following fact sheet was created using recommendations from the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project which identified important conditions that should be brought to the cattle industry's attention when transporting cattle. The goal of AFAC's Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project was to observe cattle arriving at auction markets and abattoirs throughout Alberta and catalogue the incidence and type of conditions observed upon arrival.

Key Points about Transport Decisions:

When deciding if an animal can be transported, it is important to consider how the animal will withstand loading, transit, and unloading.

If an animal is being shipped to an auction market, the animal needs to be fit enough to withstand sale conditions and at least one subsequent trip. This may involve:

- Standing on hard surfaces
- Transport on a liner, involving climbing and descending incline ramps
- Hauls of a long duration
- Mixing animals

These normal parts of transport can be dangerous for animals with an acute penis injury and can lead to undue suffering during transport depending on the animal's condition. They can also cause the animal's condition to worsen.

Why does an acute penis injury limit where an animal can be transported?

An animal with an acute penis injury is considered compromised because:

- Penis injuries can cause an animal to go into shock
- If they are unable to urinate, they are at risk of bladder rupture causing death
- Depending on the size of the injury and swelling, it may be at risk of further injury during transport or sale

Compromised animals must be transported with special provisions, directly to the nearest suitable place to receive care, treatment, or be humanely slaughtered or euthanized. **THESE ANIMALS SHOULD NOT BE TRANSPORTED TO AN AUCTION OR ASSEMBLY YARD.**

These observations from the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project demonstrate that there is still room for improvement in identifying and appropriately disposing of certain compromised and unfit conditions.

During the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project, 3% of mature bulls (6/190) arriving to auction markets were observed with acute penis injuries even though they are compromised.

Unfit animals should not be loaded or transported EXCEPT for veterinary care or diagnosis, on the advice of a veterinarian.

The importance of considering how conditions progress:

During the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project, instances of mature cattle purchased at auction being transported to another market for resale were observed on a regular basis. It was also reported that not all federal abattoirs purchase bulls for slaughter which increases the chances that cull bulls will be transported out of the province or exported to the US.

Therefore:

- It is important to consider that animals may not be destined directly for slaughter and may need to withstand multiple loading/unloading, mixing and transport events.
- It is important to consider that a cull bull may be transported a long distance to reach its final destination
- The increased time before slaughter of cull animals could also allow conditions to worsen over time.

These observations stress the importance of promptly identifying and appropriately managing bulls with penis injuries.

A condition that appears minor before initial transport may be more severe on unloading, or after multiple transport events, hauls of a long duration, or delayed time to slaughter.

It is also important to recognize when a condition may progress over time and look much different if time to slaughter is delayed due to resale, or unforeseen events such as weather, plant shutdown, or backlog. It is important to have a good relationship and open communication about transportation fitness with your local abattoir(s), auction market(s), assembly yard(s), and transporter(s).

This project was funded through the Assurance Systems stream of the AgriMarketing program under Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The project was also supported by Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Milk and Alberta Cattle Feeders Association.



References:

1. CFIA Compromised Animal Policy, available at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/humane-transport/compromised-animals-policy/eng/1360016317589/1360016435110>
2. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, NFACC, available at <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/beef-cattle>
3. Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle, NFACC, available at <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice/dairy-cattle>

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