

# Considerations for culling & transporting dairy animals to market



## What did we do?

Through the *Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project*, the condition of both beef and dairy cattle arriving at auction markets and abattoirs throughout Alberta was documented.

## What did we find?

Many heavily lactating cull dairy cattle are being sent to an unsuitable destination, which can lead to poor animal welfare and negative public perception.

### ➤ at auction markets



#### Many dairy animals were in heavy lactation

- NOTE: *Heavily lactating cattle SHOULD NOT EVER BE SENT TO AN AUCTION, but may go to an assembly yard with DIRECT-TO-SLAUGHTER provisions*

Heavily lactating is defined as requiring milking every 12 hours

During the Project, instances of mature cull cattle being purchased at auction and then being transported to another market for resale were observed on a regular basis. Therefore:

It is important to consider that, even with your best intentions, animals often are not sent directly for slaughter and may need to withstand multiple loading/unloading, mixing and transport events, and prolonged wait times. The increased time before slaughter of cull animals could also allow conditions to worsen over time. Engorged udders may be injured leading to compromised welfare.

### ➤ at provincial abattoirs



#### Some dairy animals were in heavy lactation

- NOTE: *This is the correct place where heavily lactating animals should be sent.*

## Transporting with “Special Provisions”

This is a CFIA term that means the animal must be transported more carefully than usual. For example, when transporting a heavily lactating animal with a large udder:

- ✓ ship in her own compartment, or with familiar companion
- ✓ load last and unload first
- ✓ use extra bedding and allow her to lie down



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## Why does heavy lactation limit where an animal can be transported?

According to the Health of Animals regulations, cattle are considered compromised if they are in heavy lactation because:

- They require milking every 12 hours or they will become unfit for transport
  - When left un-milked, the udder becomes distended, causing pain, potential injury and ambulatory issues
  - When left un-milked, milk may drip from the teats – these open milk ducts could increase the risk of mastitis development

Compromised animals must receive care or treatment, or be transported with special provisions, directly to the nearest suitable place to receive care, treatment, or be humanely slaughtered or euthanized.

## What should you do?

Identify cull cows in advance, when possible. Know your options for those cases where shipping is an unplanned decision.

Alberta Milk has a list of all auction markets and local abattoirs along with information about how they can assist with cull dairy cattle. Many local abattoirs can assist in the case of an unplanned event if you have established a relationship with them.

*Ask yourself the question: “Do I know I’m going to ship that cow at some point before the end of her lactation?” Then start preparing!*

Is the animal dried off?

Yes

No

Auction Market

Local Abattoir

Mobile /On Farm Butcher

Local Abattoir

Mobile/ On Farm Butcher

Delay Transport/ Euthanize

*Alberta Milk, along with Alberta Beef Producers and Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, participated in the Compromised Cattle Benchmarking Project to measure and highlight conditions of importance that should be brought to the cattle industry’s attention when transporting cattle. This project was led by Alberta Farm Animal Care.*

