

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

➤ at auction markets



Some dairy animals were lame

- NOTE: *Lame animals (score 3, 4 or 5) SHOULD NOT EVER BE SENT TO AN AUCTION, but may go to an assembly yard with DIRECT-TO-SLAUGHTER provisions*



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:

Even slight lameness where the source of the lameness might not be immediately identifiable can quickly progress to significant lameness as animals are:

- mixed and penned,
- navigate ramps and chutes,
- loaded with and pushed by many other animals,
- required to balance while being transported across multiple conditions and starts and stops,
- may fall and be stepped on, and
- are unloaded and forced to once again navigate ramps, chutes and mixing at the destination

➤ at provincial abattoirs



Many dairy animals were slightly lame

- NOTE: *A slightly lame cow (score 3) may be sent to the nearest processor*



Few dairy animals were severely lame

- NOTE: *A severely lame (score 4 or 5) or downer must be euthanized on-farm or transported for treatment only*

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 lame animal:

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

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Why does lameness limit where an animal can be transported?

According to the Health of Animals regulations, cattle are considered either compromised or unfit if they are lame because:

- Lamé cows cannot handle the stress of transport and their condition will likely become worse through the journey due to unloading, loading, mixing, and standing for long periods.

What should you do?

Identify lame cull cows as early as possible. If you can catch these animals before they become severely lame or downers, they can still be shipped directly to slaughter. Regularly assess your herd and use the criteria below to determine your options.

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.

proAction Tip!
Develop an SOP for this situation and stick to it.

Is the animal visibly lame?

No

Slight

Severe

Auction Market

Local Abattoir

Mobile /On Farm Butcher

Local Abattoir

Mobile/ On Farm Butcher

Mobile/ On Farm Butcher

Delay Transport/ Euthanize

Slight = Compromised **(Lameness Score 3)**

Movement looks imperfect; A slight limp is evident

Severe = Unfit **(Lameness Score 4 or 5)**

Has an obvious, severe limp; Cannot remain standing without help; Cannot bear weight on all four legs; Unwilling to walk; Halted movement; Cannot rise

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.

