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Animal Welfare Guidelines – Trade and Transport of Calves, Including Bobby Calves

Approved under Section 44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water – October 2008.
Replaces Animal Welfare Standard No 11 – Trade and Transport of Calves, Including Bobby Calves

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ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES

Animal welfare considerations are becoming increasingly important in the keeping and farming of animals, both in Australia and internationally. Practices which may have once been deemed acceptable or justifiable, are now being reassessed in the light of new knowledge and changing attitudes. High standards of welfare are not only important legally and ethically, but also have direct economic benefits and are becoming increasingly necessary for continued market access.

Tasmania's Animal Welfare Guidelines are approved by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, after consultation with the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, in accordance with section 44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

Under the Animal Welfare Act, Animal Welfare Guidelines are to include guidelines for the education and guidance of persons involved in the care and management of animals. Animal Welfare Guidelines are therefore advisory in nature. They are intended to help people involved in the care and management of animals adopt high standards of husbandry.

The Animal Welfare Guidelines may be based on the *Australian Model Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Animals*, or the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines*, endorsed by the Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC). Alternatively, where there is no suitable national model, Animal Welfare Guidelines may be developed in Tasmania, in consultation with industry and animal welfare groups.

Animal Welfare Guidelines will be revised to take into account changes in animal management practices and knowledge of animal welfare.

The *Animal Welfare Guidelines – Trade and Transport of Calves, Including Bobby Calves* were developed in Tasmania by the Department of Primary Industries and Water in consultation with the dairy industry.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Scope of these Guidelines
- 1.2 Intention of these Guidelines
- 1.3 Further Information

2. Duty of Care

- 2.1 The Producer or Producer's Representative
- 2.2 The Transport Driver
- 2.3 The Saleyard Operator

3. Feeding

- 3.1 Colostrum Feeding
- 3.2 Feeding Prior to Collection
- 3.3 Feeding at Saleyards

4. Facilities for Calves

- 4.1 Housing
- 4.2 Calf Saleyards

5. Maturity and Acceptability for Sale or Slaughter

6. Calf Diseases and Drug Residues

- 6.1 Diseases
- 6.2 Drug Residues

7. Transport

- 7.1 Handling, Loading and Unloading
- 7.2 Transport Vehicles, Traveling Precautions and Duration of Journey

8. Emergency Humane Destruction

9. Minimum Requirements

- 9.1 Feeding
- 9.2 Housing
- 9.3 Health
- 9.4 Handling
- 9.5 Transport

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of these Guidelines

These Guidelines apply to all people associated with the production, transport and sale of young calves, including bobby calves. They recognize the vulnerability of very young calves and cover those aspects of welfare unique to these animals in general and the bobby calf trade in particular.

These Guidelines relate to unweaned calves which:

- have been separated from their mothers; and
- are under 4 weeks of age; and
- are being transported, traded or sold, or being offered for transport, trade or sale.

“Bobby calves” may be defined as calves which are to be slaughtered for human consumption within a few days of birth. The trade in bobby calves is a significant aspect of the dairy industry. It is a trade which subjects very young orphan calves to the rigors of transport, sale and slaughter. The trade is open to criticism from an animal welfare viewpoint.

The scope of these Guidelines does not include calves being artificially reared as replacements or for meat, or calves awaiting slaughter in abattoirs and slaughterhouses.

The *Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals – Land Transport of Livestock* contain specific provisions relating to the transport of bobby calves. The standards therein are likely to become law in all States and territories.

1.2 Intention of these Guidelines

These Guidelines are intended to:

1. Establish who has the legal duty of care for the welfare of young calves being transported or traded, and set out the responsibilities of those concerned; and
2. Encourage all those associated with the transport or trade of young calves, including bobby calves, to adopt the highest standards of husbandry.

These Guidelines take account of five basic requirements to safeguard the welfare of young calves:

- freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition;
- the provision of appropriate comfort and shelter;
- the prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment, of injury, disease or infestation with parasites;
- freedom from distress;
- ability to display normal patterns of behavior.

1.3 Further Information

Further guidelines for the welfare of calves will be found in Tasmania's *Animal Welfare Guidelines* for:

- Cattle
- Road Transport of Livestock Within Tasmania
- Animals in Saleyards
- Transport of Livestock Across Bass Strait

These Animal Welfare Guidelines are available from the Department of Primary Industries and Water.

The welfare of calves awaiting slaughter in abattoirs and slaughterhouses is covered by the (Australian) *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals - Livestock (including Poultry) at Slaughtering Establishments (Abattoirs, Slaughterhouses and Knackeries)*.

This Code is available from CSIRO Publications, Melbourne.

2. DUTY OF CARE

Under the Animal Welfare Act, those who have the care or charge of animals have a legal “duty of care” for the welfare of those animals, and must take all reasonable measures to ensure their welfare.

2.1 The Producer or the Producer’s Representative

The producer or the producer’s representative is responsible for the care, preparation and presentation of calves which are healthy and sufficiently mature and robust to withstand the rigors of transport and trade.

The producer or producer’s representative should ensure that calves for transport or trade comply with the requirements of Section 5 of these guidelines - *Maturity and Acceptability for Sale or Slaughter*.

2.2 The Transport Driver

In accepting calves for transport, the transport driver becomes legally responsible for their welfare. Transport drivers should refuse to load calves which, in their opinion, do not comply with the requirements of Section 5 of these Guidelines, or are otherwise unsuitable for transport or trade. See Sections 7 and 9.6 - *Transport*.

2.3 The Saleyard Operator

In accepting calves to be sold in saleyards, the saleyard operator becomes legally responsible for their welfare. See section 4.2 - *Calf Saleyards*.

3. FEEDING

The objectives are to provide food for maintenance and growth and to protect the calf from disease.

3.1 Colostrum Feeding

Colostrum, the first milk produced by a cow after calving, contains special nutrients and antibodies to protect the calf from disease. The calf absorbs antibodies from ingested colostrum, but begins to lose the ability to do so commencing about 6 hours after birth. The concentration of antibodies in the colostrum diminishes rapidly after calving and is also reduced markedly by two milkings either before or after calving.

It is essential that every calf receives colostrum from its dam or from another newly calved cow as soon as possible after it is born, and certainly within the first 6 hours of its life. The rate of absorption of antibodies from the gut falls off rapidly. Absorption has virtually stopped 24-36 hours after birth. Even so colostrum, either fresh or stored, is a high quality food and ideally

should be fed for the first 4 days of the calf's life.

As a general guide, colostrum (or milk for older calves) should be fed at the rate of 10-12% of body weight per day, i.e. about 2-4 litres per day during the first week after birth, depending on birth weight. The higher rate should be fed for lower body weight calves for that breed of animal.

3.2 Feeding Prior to Collection

When a calf is collected from the farm gate, it should have been fed its normal ration on the morning of collection so that it can withstand the rigors of transportation, saleyards and the waiting period before slaughter. Tasmania's Animal Welfare Guidelines - Cattle state that calves should be fed within 12 hours of transportation.

3.3 Feeding at Saleyards

Calves are highly susceptible to dehydration. They should be removed from saleyards as soon as possible following sale. Bobby calves should not be held longer than 10 hours without being fed an appropriate liquid food. See 8.1 Minimum Requirements - Feeding.

4. FACILITIES FOR CALVES

4.1 Housing

Young calves are very prone to hypothermia (a fall in body temperature below normal that can result in death) and always need to be provided with shelter. Draughty shelters are not satisfactory.

Sheds with concrete or slatted floors should be constructed so that they are easy to clean and disinfect. Deep litter (not tanned sawdust and shavings, which are toxic) is suitable for the calves' comfort. It should be replaced after each batch of calves and following an outbreak of infectious disease.

Ventilation should be sufficient to remove toxic gases and dust, and to maintain airflow without causing draughts.

Enough space should be provided so that all animals can lie down together on a dry area. All fittings and internal surfaces should be constructed to ensure there are no hazards likely to cause injury. Lighting at all times should be sufficient to enable inspection of all animals, but not so intense as to cause discomfort.

4.2 Calf Saleyards

Facilities provided for calves in saleyards should:

- Protect calves from sun, rain and draughts
- Have non-injurious internal fittings and surfaces
- Be easy to clean and disinfect
- Have free-draining, non-slip flooring
- Allow calves to lie down together in a dry area

5. MATURITY AND ACCEPTABILITY FOR SALE OR SLAUGHTER

To be suitable for transport, sale or slaughter, calves including bobby calves must:

1. be at least 4 days old (or 3 weeks old in the case of artificially induced calves)
2. weigh at least 23 kg (Friesian) or 15 kg (Jersey)
3. have been fed on colostrum, milk or milk replacer.
4. be free from drug residues
5. have a navel cord which is wrinkled, withered and shriveled and not pink or red coloured, raw or fleshy
6. have hooves that are firm and worn flat and not bulbous with soft unworn tissue
7. be in good health, alert and able to rise from a lying position; they should not be listless and unable to protect themselves
8. be strong enough to withstand the stress of travel and have been adequately fed; not obviously diseased, not malformed, blind or disabled in any way; and not be wet and cold.

The acceptability of calves, including bobby calves for sale or slaughter, is related to maturity and size rather than age. Generally, larger calves will be more robust and will more readily withstand the stresses of transport and environmental change.

Only calves meeting the above requirements should be offered for sale or slaughter.

Calves under 25 kg (Friesian) or 15 kg (Jersey) at birth (which are usually too premature to survive), as well as those with severe physical defects and painful congenital defects, should be humanely destroyed. (See Section 8: Emergency Humane Destruction.)

Premature (e.g. artificially induced) calves should only be transported or offered for sale or slaughter if:

1. they are at least 3 weeks old; and
2. they meet the minimum requirements for full-term calves.

6. CALF DISEASES AND DRUG RESIDUES

6.1 Diseases

Under the Animal Welfare Act it is an offence to have possession or custody of a sick or injured animal and fail to provide veterinary or other appropriate treatment.

Only calves believed to be healthy and free of disease should be submitted for sale or slaughter. The most common diseases affecting very young calves are gastro-intestinal disturbances which are usually associated with scouring (diarrhoea), respiratory infections, including pneumonia, and navel ill.

These conditions can be caused by a variety of different organisms and/or non-infectious factors. If problems do not respond to changes in management, veterinary advice should be sought. Calf scours can be due to a variety of infectious and non-infectious factors, including dietary disturbances. Rehydration with electrolytes is an important part of the treatment of severe cases.

Control of infectious scouring depends largely upon standards of hygiene.

Animal Welfare Guidelines – Trade and Transport of Calves, Including Bobby Calves

Pneumonia and other respiratory diseases are commonly infectious in origin, and control depends largely on management and controlling environmental factors such as ventilation and temperature.

Navel ill (omphalophlebitis) is the name given to infection of the umbilicus which occurs soon after birth, and may lead to widespread infection of the body, with localization of infection in the liver, kidney, and joints. Joint infections result in lameness. Such infections would also result in condemnation of the carcass.

6.2 Drug Residues

It is an offense to present an animal for slaughter which has been exposed to chemical substances, resulting in residues exceeding allowable levels. Most drugs and chemicals have a legal withholding period - a period of time which must elapse between treatment and slaughter. This is often 30 or more days.

Bobby calves however, are intended for slaughter at a few days of age, and must be free from drug residues. Residues can occur in bobby calves either directly from injections and tablets given to the calves themselves, or indirectly through the milk from cows that have been treated with drugs, or from feed containing drug additives or contaminants.

Under no circumstances should antibiotics, sulphonamides or other drugs be administered directly to calves destined for the bobby calf trade.

If a bobby calf is indirectly exposed to such drugs (e.g. through ingested milk), it must be withheld from the trade for a period in accordance with the drug manufacturers instructions or for a minimum of 14 days, whichever is the longer. Withheld calves must be fed on milk replacers (artificial or natural) or milk which is free of antibacterials.

7. TRANSPORT

7.1 Handling, Loading and Unloading

Much bruising and injury to calves can be attributed to the manner in which they are loaded into and out of vehicles and during transfer from one vehicle to another. Care must be taken during these procedures.

Handling of calves should be carried out in a manner which will avoid injury, bruising or unnecessary suffering.

Calves should be lifted bodily on to and off the trays of the trucks, and only pushed up ramps into pens by reasonable force, carefully applied.

Conventional handling aids such as lengths of polythene hose, sticks, electric prodders and close working dogs, although suitable for adult cattle, should not be used on calves.

See 9.6 Minimum Requirements -Transport.

7.2 Transport Vehicles, Traveling Precautions and Duration of the Journey

Calves are particularly susceptible to infection and can be contaminated by dirty transport vehicles. All vehicles must be cleaned before they are used to transport calves.

The use of substandard or poorly maintained transport vehicles greatly increases stress and the risk of injury and exposes the operator to the cruelty provisions of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

Animal Welfare Guidelines – Trade and Transport of Calves, Including Bobby Calves

The longer the journey the greater the effect is likely to be on the physical condition of the calves arriving at their final destination. Rough driving and bad weather also worsen their condition.

Construction of the stock crate, truck decking and appropriate loading of the pens on the truck, to provide security without overcrowding, must be taken into consideration.

Wind chill can cause significant stress and discomfort to young calves therefore transport vehicles should have a solid front and suitable side panels to minimize the effect of wind.

The maximum allowable duration of journey for calves covered by these Guidelines is 10 hours. No journey transporting such calves, including bobby calves shall be undertaken if the first calf collected will take more than 10 hours to reach the final destination.

Calves covered by these Guidelines must not be transported across Bass Strait.

See 9.6 Minimum Requirements -Transport.

8. EMERGENCY HUMANE DESTRUCTION

Calves with broken bones and other severe injuries must be destroyed if they are not to be treated by a veterinarian. They must be destroyed in a humane manner by an experienced and competent person.

Calves should be shot with a captive bolt pistol or firearm, before "sticking". The recommended method for the destruction of cattle is the frontal method (See Figure 1). The captive-bolt pistol or firearm is directed at the point of intersection of lines taken from the base of each ear to the opposite eye, whilst aiming along the neck.

Where this is not possible, calves may be stunned by a blow to the head with a blunt instrument which is of sufficient strength to produce unconsciousness.

All calves, whether shot or stunned, must be rapidly bled to death by severing the major blood vessels in the neck. The bleeding out of calves without pre-stunning must not be undertaken.

Cattle have an additional blood supply to the brain enabling them to remain conscious for a considerable time after the throat is cut.

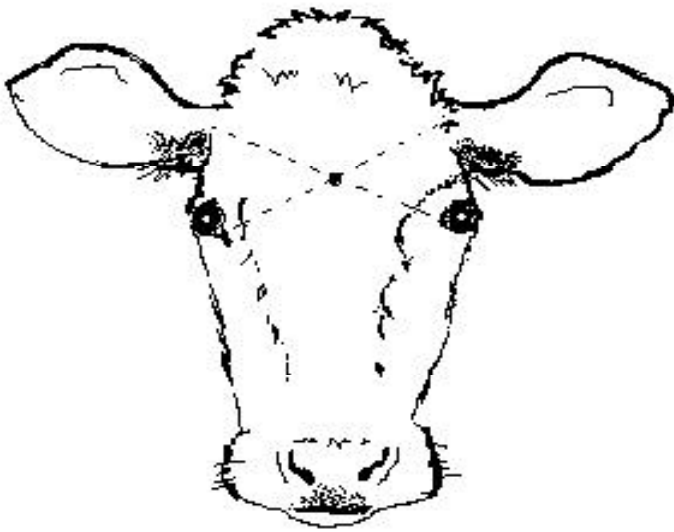


Figure 1. Humane destruction of calves - recommended position for the frontal method. Suitable for captive-bolt pistol or firearm.

9. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Feeding

Wherever possible the calf should be encouraged to suck colostrum from its dam within 6 hours of birth. If a calf is unable to suckle its own dam within 6 hours, it should be allowed to suckle another cow which has calved within the previous 12 hours, or should be given 2-3 litres of freshly obtained (or stored) colostrum from the first milking of other cows.

Thereafter the calf should receive suitable liquid food (fresh or stored colostrum, milk or commercial milk replacer), at least once a day, at a rate of 10-12% of body weight (1.0 to 1.2 litres per 10 kg bodyweight).

Calves should be fed their normal ration on the morning of transport for sale or slaughter.

Calves held in saleyards should be fed after 10 hours and at least 24 hourly thereafter.

9.2 Housing

Housing should be built so that the calves are not exposed to rain or draughts.

Internal surfaces and fittings of buildings should not have sharp edges or projections likely to cause injury.

All floors, particularly slatted ones, should be designed, constructed and maintained to avoid injury to the calves.

The flooring and walls of housing, with the exception of systems based on deep litter, should be cleaned regularly with a 10% solution of formalin or its equivalent, to kill viruses, protozoa and bacteria. Regular disinfection of the housing facilities should take place between groups of calves and particularly if there has been an outbreak of disease.

The flooring should be free draining so that water and urine drains away and the flooring dries out during the day.

Fresh shavings, straw or sawdust (not tanned) should be added regularly to the bedding or housing based on a deep litter system. Deep litter should be replaced annually or following an outbreak of an infectious disease.

To allow adequate feeding and to limit the spread of disease, housed calves should not be overcrowded but kept in small groups so that all calves can lie down together in a dry area.

9.3 Health

No calf showing signs of distress shall be submitted for sale or slaughter.

Calves sent for sale or slaughter should be clean and kept in hygienic conditions.

Veterinary advice should be sought if any disease becomes a recurring problem.

9.4 Handling

Handling of calves should be carried out in a manner which will avoid injury, bruising or unnecessary suffering. Calves should not be carried by the legs, thrown, kicked, beaten, dragged or pulled along by the head or prodded with a sharp instrument.

It is not acceptable to use un-muzzled dogs which are prone to bite when handling, driving, drafting, weighing, loading or unloading calves.

Conventional handling aids such as lengths of polythene hose, sticks, electric prodders and close working dogs, although suitable for adult cattle, should not be used on calves.

Calves should be lifted bodily on to and off the trays of the trucks, and only pushed up ramps into pens by reasonable force, carefully applied.

9.6 Transport

Where decking is not of the modern woven mesh type, rubber floor mats with suitable grip should be installed in the doorway of trucks.

All vehicles used to transport calves should be cleaned and disinfected before the calves are loaded.

Stock crates should provide secure accommodation for the calves.

Pens on trucks should have adequate space to prevent overcrowding. On the other hand, the calves should not be so loosely packed that they can be thrown about by the motion of the truck. There must be a minimum floor space of 0.2 m² per calf.

The floors, sides and internal partitions of the transport vehicle should be constructed so that the calves' legs cannot become caught.

Truck decking must be structurally capable of bearing the weight of the animals being transported, and well secured.

All decks *must* be constructed of materials which will provide a reasonable foothold for calves.

Upper decks must have an impervious floor to protect the calves underneath from becoming soiled from above.

Doors must be capable of being latched securely.

Crates should be divided in half by a longitudinal partition.

Individual pens should not be more than 3 meters long.

The front of the stock crate of all trucks, and the front of all vehicles used by farmers to transport calves, should be covered against the wind at all times. Covers should be positioned to give calves the maximum protection from wind, but allow adequate ventilation.

Driving speeds should be such that the calves are not thrown violently against each other and the sides of the pens. Drivers should stop every 2 hours to check the loading and comfort of the calves. If any calf is visibly distressed or injured, the loading should be rearranged, and any necessary treatment undertaken.

During transport, calves should be segregated from animals of a different age, class or species.

Trucks and trailers carrying calves shall not be parked in such a way that the animals might suffer from extreme heat or cold.

No journey transporting bobby calves shall be undertaken if the first calf collected will take more than 10 hours to reach the final destination.