

NYSCHAP Cattle Welfare Certification Module Outline:

Participation – Farms enrolled in the core module of NYSCHAP will be able to participate in the Cattle Welfare Certification Module when they meet the standards for the issues addressed below.

Enrollment – Farms must meet all standards for the issues addressed for enrollment into the cattle welfare module. Prior to the certification visit producers may request one pre-certification visit to determine areas of deficiencies.

Annual Recertification – Upon recertification farms must meet all standard for the issues addressed in the cattle welfare module. Recertification must occur within 10-14 months of enrollment anniversary date. For farms that can not meet standards upon annual recertification due to extenuating circumstances the recertification period can be extended up to 60 days; a second 60 day extension can be granted if initial problem has been addressed and improvement is in progress. Any extension for recertification must be documented and submitted to the NYSCHAP coordinator.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) – Farm specific SOPs that are reviewed by the herd veterinarian will be in place for specified cattle welfare contingencies (see categories to follow). These SOPs will be posted or filed where they will be accessible to employees. Employees will review SOPs at least once per year.

Farms participating in the welfare module will have a clear understanding of basic cattle husbandry and care outlined in their NYSCHAP herd plan. The veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR) is established to allow certain decisions to be made under veterinary guidance and supervision; other decisions should be made only by the veterinarian. It is recommended that written SOPs (e.g. fresh cow monitoring, mastitis treatment flow-chart, disaster preparedness, proper disposal of dead animals) be established for employee training and implementation of standard practices. Adherence to these protocols should help to promote animal health and avoid many potential breaches in cattle welfare. The herd veterinarian and SOPs must be available during the certification visit.

SOPs are required for care of non-ambulatory cattle; AABP Practical Euthanasia (provided by NYSCHAP certifier); euthanasia action plan for all ages of cattle; hospital animals; newborn calves; lameness; and routine/elective surgical procedures.

Employee Training – Employees involved in cattle care and handling will be trained in SOPs specific to their job duties at the time of employment. New employees must be evaluated at least twice during the first year of employment (Garry, 2004). Training records must be available at the certification visit.

Identification of Sick or Injured Cattle – Designated employees are trained in the assessment of cattle for identification of sick and/or injured animals. Cattle are assessed on a daily basis and sick or injured cattle are separated/segregated to an appropriate area for effective, prompt treatment or euthanasia decision. Herd veterinarians are responsible for reviewing and accepting the culling and mortality records for the farm.

Non-ambulatory cattle – The SOP must include provision for prompt removal, no longer than 2 hours after discovery, from concrete to a safe, well-bedded area that provides adequate footing, provision of feed and water without competition from other cattle; protection from self injury and injury from other cattle; and protection from environmental elements. (Cox, McGrath, Jorgensen, Am J Vet Res, Vol 43, 1982; Garry, 2004; Smith 2002)

A timeframe must be specified in the SOP for providing medical intervention, veterinary consultation when necessary, and timely euthanasia decisions.

Transporting or moving cattle that are non-ambulatory:

1. For distances over 10 feet – cattle are moved by use of appropriate sledding device, sling or bucket. Cattle are moved onto these devices with as little discomfort as possible. If necessary, cattle should be humanely euthanized before transport.
2. Dragging is acceptable ONLY when unavoidable and for distances less than 10 feet. Plenty of bedding must be used.

Culling:

A culling plan will decrease the occurrence of non-ambulatory cattle. The culling plan will have a drug residue avoidance plan to include assessment of realistic likelihood of recovery prior to administering drugs with withdrawal times.

Euthanasia

1. Decision making to be based upon:
 - a. Pain and distress of the cattle
 - b. Likelihood of recovery
 - c. Ability to get to feed and water
 - d. Medications used on the cattle
 - e. Drug withdrawal time
 - f. Diagnostic information
 - g. Condemnation potential
 - h. Economics
2. Approved methods and protocols should be adhered to as outlined in 'Practical Euthanasia of Cattle' produced by AABP (American Association of Bovine Practitioners), www.aabp.org.

Hospital Cattle – to include all production groups

1. Treatment or euthanasia decisions should be based on monitoring for:
 - a. Recovery potential
 - b. Deterioration
 - c. Uncontrollable pain
 - d. Locomotion
 - e. BCS
2. Written protocols should be developed for assessment and routine treatments under supervision and training of a veterinarian. The protocol should include guidelines for when a veterinarian should be called for individual cow care and criteria for culling vs. euthanasia.
3. Access to feed and water without competition from healthy cows must be provided.
4. Criteria are in place for supportive care for cull cattle when shipment is necessarily delayed.
5. It is recommended that hospital cattle be segregated from healthy cattle, including maternity cattle.

Care of Newborn Calves (Garry 2004; Grandin, 2002)

1. Neglect of market calves is unacceptable
2. Heifer and bull calves must be fed appropriate colostrum within 6 hours of birth
3. Provide all calves a clean and dry environment.
4. Provide shelter that is appropriate to environmental conditions (moisture, temperature, wind and sun).
5. Meet the following conditions when transporting calves:
 - a. Ensure that calves are dry.
 - b. Calves will not be transported until they are able to walk and easily stand without assistance, except when transporting to on-site calf housing facilities.
 - c. Protect from extreme temperatures; use a clean and disinfected vehicle in good repair; handle calves gently when loading and unloading; drive to avoid cattle injury
 - d. Ensure that market calves are fed at least every 12 hours prior to transport.

Lameness - A management system for early detection and effective, prompt treatment of lameness should be developed. (Berry, Zinpro, 2001)

1. Assess potential problems including employee training, facilities, nutrition, and infectious disease.
2. Implement management practices to minimize new occurrences (nutrition, trimming, hoof care, environment, etc).
3. At least 85% of each animal management group must have a locomotion score of one.

Hygiene

1. Cattle should be maintained in facilities which contribute to clean and dry hair coats and udders.
2. Hygiene scoring can be used to evaluate facility design and maintenance (Cook, 2002).
3. Goal is to minimize the occurrence of hygiene scores 3 and 4.

Dairies must meet the following standards:

Score all cattle of each animal management group.			
Tie stall:		Loose housing:	
○ Lower leg	75% <3	○ Lower leg	40% <3
○ Udder	80% <3	○ Udder	80% <3
○ Flank & upper leg	70% <3	○ Flank & upper leg	80% <3

Body Condition Score-(Braun, et. al, The Bovine Proceedings, April 1987; Robert Patton, Topics in Veterinary Medicine, Autumn 1991; Temple Grandin – www.grandin.com)

1. All cattle must receive a wholesome daily diet which is nutritionally adequate
2. All cattle must have continual access to adequate supply of clean water
3. Upon certification each animal management group of animals over 12 months of age must have 90% of the group with ≥ 2 body condition score

Facilities and Environment

1. Maintain all facilities in good repair to avoid discomfort, distress and injury
2. Housing circumstances, including overcrowding, that affects cattle welfare will be captured by/with increased lameness scores, poor hygiene scores, and wide ranges of BCS due to inadequate access to feed and water.
3. Provide shelter from elements appropriate to weather conditions.
4. Provide and maintain non-slip flooring in cow traffic areas that prevent cows from falling.
5. Use handling and restraint facilities appropriate for management procedures.

Cattle Movement and Handling

1. Management will not tolerate any acts of abuse or mistreatment. Consequences for such action are clearly described to all farm personnel. Written documentation of consequences is recommended.
2. SOPs are recommended for farms that have employees routinely trained in cattle movement and handling.
3. Employees should have training regarding cattle behavior, flight zones and proper use of all cattle handling equipment (Grandin, 2002). Employees should be regularly evaluated when moving cattle.
4. Cattle should be moved in a calm, quiet and careful manner.
5. Facilities should be appropriate for handling. Lighting, shadows, non-slip floors, gates and corrals can affect movement of cattle. Evaluate facilities for objects that can create hazards to cattle moving throughout the farm.
6. Prods, canes and other extreme methods are rarely necessary for routine movement. These devices should be used only when the situation is critical to the cattle's health and well-being and/or human safety.
7. When present, crowd gates should be designed and used to allow for normal cow response and movement. Employees should be trained to properly use crowd gates.

Routine/Elective Surgical Procedures – including dehorning, castration, teat removal and tail docking

1. Elective surgical procedures should only be performed by appropriately trained personnel, under acceptable sanitary conditions, in consultation with a veterinarian. Procedures should be done with appropriate use of anesthetic and/or analgesic.
2. In all cases, these procedures should be performed on appropriately aged cattle:
 - a. Castration
 - i. Closed castration of bull calves should be performed before two months of age
 - ii. Older bulls or open castration procedures should be performed with the use of anesthetic/analgesic in consultation with a veterinarian.
 - b. Dehorning
 - i. Procedure for dairy calves should be performed before two months of age.
 - ii. Beef calves should be dehorned at the earliest time of detection, no later than weaning.
 - iii. The use of anesthesia/sedation/analgesia is recommended for all ages.
 - c. Teat Removal – perform removal at youngest age that supernumerary teats can be identified
 - d. Tail docking may be a routine management decision and must be appropriately done in consultation with a veterinarian.