**SOP #10 – Down Cattle Management**

*(Question AC20, July 2021 Reference Manual pages 4-6 to 4-8. All shaded areas are required elements of your SOP. You may use your own words to communicate the same intent.)*

Purpose: Farmers manage their cattle to prevent injuries and illness, but accidents happen and cattle do get sick, which can result in down cattle (cattle that are unable or unwilling to stand). Down cattle are an emergency and need to be managed carefully to ensure adequate care and minimal discomfort.

* On this farm we will ensure that any animals under our ownership and/or care that are unable to rise (considered non-ambulatory) due to health issues or injury will be handled in a humane manner with efforts to reduce stress and mitigate pain while ensuring the safety of those working to aid them.
* We acknowledge that animals may not respond to certain treatments, may not be able to recover from certain injuries, and that the most humane option may be euthanasia, which will be done promptly according to the Euthanasia SOP.
* The persons who will assist lifting and/or moving downed animals : , \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and/or other persons as delegated from time to time by either the owner or herdsperson.
  + If in doubt, contact the owner:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at this phone number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the situation.
  + Consultation with our veterinarian: Dr.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ may be required when determining a course of action.
  + All persons handling cattle will be trained in the safe, humane and effective handling of cattle.

**Action**

Time is of the essence when dealing with downed animals. The location where the animal has gone down will determine whether she must be moved or if she may be treated in place. This will also have an impact on what equipment or lift technique is used to assist the animal.

* Immediate Action
  + Immediate assistance is required if the animal has fallen in the parlour, walk-way, alleyway (when automatic scrapers are present), dug out, or handling system. If the animal has fallen on hard surface (concrete, ice, etc), she will be moved within\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ hours of going down in order to prevent pressure damage on her legs.
* Delayed Action – no more than 6 hours
  + Situations that may allow for delayed assistance are where the animal is down and not at risk of further injury or endangerment to herself, other animals, or handlers. Examples of this situation may include illness (e.g. milk fever, grass tetany, metritis), difficult calving (calving paralysis), a pinched nerve, or any situation where the animal is not blocking normal activity or movement of other animals (e.g. stall, calving pen).

If an animal becomes sick, injured or goes down we will:

* Promptly diagnose the condition of the animal and the likelihood of recovery.
* Assess the situation immediately.
* Determine if the animal can be treated and/or cared for where it is lying or if it needs to be moved.
  + If the animal can be treated and/or cared for where they are lying, we will treat them there until they recover and can get up.
  + If the animal is lying on its side, it will be rolled into an upright (resting on its chest) position immediately and support placed around the animal to ensure it retains this position.

In the case of illness or injury, we may consult with our veterinarian or use the following documents as a reference in determining a course of action:

* Humane Handling Guidelines for Dairy Cattle
* Code of Practice for Dairy Cattle
* Code of Practice for Transport

**Equipment**

If the animal is in an area where they must be moved (milking parlor, walk-way, etc.), we will follow the procedure below:

* Equipment used will depend on the distance the animal must be moved and what is available on the farm.
* All equipment will be used according to manufacturer’s specifications, personnel will be trained on its use prior to moving an animal and the necessary support will be provided to the animal during movement. Specialized equipment we use include(s):
* Sled – rubber mats, plywood, tarps
* Hoist – wide belting
* Bucket – scoop bucket on a tractor, skid steer
* Chains or Webbing
* Hip Lifters – should only be used to lift twice daily for 15-20 minutes
* Float Tanks
* Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

We will:

* Gently move, rock or roll the animal onto the equipment to minimize stress and trauma.
* Protect the animal’s eyes and face if moving (short distances only) onto equipment.
* Always move the animal over the shortest distance possible.
* Provide shavings, straw, or other material for traction when trying to get an animal to rise and walk a short distance.
* If the animal must be moved but we cannot do so humanely, we will euthanize it where it is, according to our Euthanasia SOP.

**Precautions**

When working on a downed animal, we will ensure that we work from behind the downed animal, avoiding any work near or contact with the legs to avoid being kicked. Caution should also be taken when working near the head as cattle use a lunging action when trying to rise and this may result in injury to a handler if the head or neck hits them. We will:

* Remain calm and patient
* Not pull, push, drag, or lift an animal by the neck or legs unless human or animal safety is at risk and there is no other option. Even then, we will only do so for a few feet with force being applied for a very brief period of time.
* We will carefully protect the animal as much as possible and then move them using the method as described above.
* Avoid the use of electric prods unless necessary when animal or human safety is at risk.
* Never use hip lifters or clamps to move to carry down cattle from one location to another.
* Never move a downed animal alone (2-4 people minimum).
* Never transport a downed animal, except to a veterinarian for treatment.

**Treatment**

* The recovery location is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and will include the following:
  + Proper non-slip footing or, if in a stall, the gutter is covered.
  + Shelter from the elements and protection from predators.
  + Frequent easy access to fresh food and water.
  + Isolation from other animals to prevent injury and support recovery.
* Downed animals will be monitored at least twice daily and treated as per the herd manager or veterinarian’s treatment plan.
* Roll animal from side to side every two hours initially.
* Provide udder pressure relief by maintaining milking routine or milking as necessary.
* If they are beyond recovery, we will euthanize them according to our Euthanasia SOP.