**SOP #11 - Euthanasia**

*(Question AC13, July 2023 Reference Manual page 4-9. All shaded areas are required elements of your SOP. You may use your own words to communicate the same intent.)*

Purpose: All farm personnel responsible for animal health and euthanasia decisions must understand how to euthanize cattle effectively and efficiently to minimize stress to the animals.

* On this farm we will promptly euthanize cattle, in a safe and humane manner, with untreatable conditions, not responding to treatment, or not fit for transport. We do this to ensure that animals will not suffer slowly through a prolonged death.
* The persons responsible for making the decision to euthanize an animal : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and/or other persons as delegated from time to time by either the owner or herdsperson.
* The persons permitted to euthanize an animal are:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, , and/or other persons as delegated from time to time by either the owner or herdsperson.
* All persons permitted will be trained in the safe and effective method of euthanasia.
* For the use of firearms training may include a review of proper firearm handling, target practice on inanimate objects and position to review overshot and potential danger and liability.
* When considering euthanizing an animal, each animal will be reviewed on an individual basis. The decision-making process may include:
* pain and distress of the animal
* likelihood of recovery
* ability to get to feed and water
* medications used on the animal
* drug withdrawal time
* condemnation potential
* diagnostic information.
* Any animal with a major injury will be euthanized as soon as possible (i.e. broken leg).
* Animals with illness/minor injuries will be given the opportunity to receive treatment, including rest, and recover.
* Consultation with the herd veterinarian: Dr.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ may be part of the review and decision-making process.
* Depending on the mobility of the animal to be euthanized and the method of euthanasia, the animal may be moved to a different location to allow for safer use of a firearm and/or easier removal of the animal from the facility.

**Euthanasia Method (indicate method used)**

*NOTE: The following are the only acceptable methods for on-farm euthanasia of cattle:*

* *Free bullet: .22 caliber for calves, .22 magnum or high-powered rifle for mature heifers, cows and bulls.*
* *Penetrating captive bolt – followed by pithing, bleeding or cardiac puncture.*
* *Injection with barbiturates and other drugs (administered by a licensed veterinarian).*
* We will call the veterinarian and have them euthanize the animal and confirm death.

AND/OR

* We use a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ firearm. See the diagrams below for the correct placement of the shot.

AND/OR

* We use a captive bolt, followed by pithing, bleeding or cardiac puncture

**Target Site and Penetration Angle**

For cattle older than six months, the captive bolt or gunshot should penetrate the skull at the intersection of lines extending from the lower base of each side of the horn bed to the inside corner of the opposite eye as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Target site and penetration angle for euthanasia of cattle older than six months

For calves six months of age and younger, direct the shot at the intersection of lines drawn from the top base of each ear to the inside corner of the eye on the opposite side of the head (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Target site and penetration angle for euthanasia of calves six months and younger.

* We will approach the animal in a calm manner to minimize stress and excitement of the animal to be euthanized. This will allow a safer, more confident shot to be placed which will increase accuracy of the shot.
* Before taking the shot, consideration will be given for trajectory of the shot and potential risk to people, other animals and facilities.
* We will not move or leave the animal prior to confirmation of death. Unconsciousness will be confirmed by checking for lack of corneal reflex (lack of blink response when touching the eyeball).
* We will confirm death by checking for a lack of heartbeat, using a stethoscope, and respiration after five minutes.
* If animal is still conscious or death cannot be confirmed another shot can be placed centered behind the poll and directed along the plane of the face.