

Assessment of the Dairy Facility

Introduction

This short assessment will objectively evaluate many different factors that impact animal welfare on the dairy facility. After reading each statement, check the appropriate box. Check “Yes” if the entire statement supports the current practices and policies of the dairy, or “No” if the statement is not an accurate description. The “NA” denotes a statement that does not apply to the specific facility. Detailed information on each section of statements listed in the **Assessment of the Dairy Facility** is provided in the **Technical Guide**.

Management and Policies

Yes No NA

- Management establishes and implements standards for the care, handling and well-being of animals on the dairy and communicates expectations to employees.
- On-farm written policies are reviewed twice per year to remind employees, management, field staff or other personnel of the importance of animal care, well-being, and comfort.
- Dairy personnel are trained in proper animal handling and animal behavior.
- All animals on the dairy are observed daily for comfort, locomotion, and behavioral changes.
- Written emergency/weekend/holiday animal care plans (emergency phone numbers, contacts and protocols) are posted in a visible location in both English and Spanish.

Health Care

Yes No NA

- The dairy operation has a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship (name of veterinarian and contact information is posted).
- Tail docking is not performed as a routine practice.

Dairy management and licensed veterinarian(s) cooperatively write health and care protocols that are available for the following routine care and herd health programs:

Yes No NA

- Vaccine schedule
- Pest and parasite control schedule
- Quarantine procedures for newly arrived animals
- Reproductive examinations
- Locomotion scoring
- Hoof trimming
- Body condition scoring
- Cleanliness and hygiene scoring
- Fresh cow and calving observations
- Sick and injured animal care, including nonambulatory animals
- Euthanasia protocols for animals
- Castration
- Dehorning
- Extra teat removal

Facilities and Environment

Yes No NA

- Facilities are designed and maintained to provide safe and comfortable conditions for all dairy animals.
- Adequate lighting allows for inspection of animals and provides safe working conditions.
- All animals are provided with a clean, dry area to lie down and ruminate.
- If free stalls are used, there is a stall for every cow.
- Animals in corrals can avoid standing in mud or manure over their dewclaws.

- Facility is sized so cows can exercise at will, and timid cows can avoid dominant cows and still have access to feed, water, and resting place.
- Milking facilities are designed so that cows are standing on concrete for less than 2 hours from the time they leave the pen until they return at each milking.
- Milking equipment is tested and maintained to prevent injury or discomfort to cows.
- Heat stress is reduced using one or more of the following as needed: shades, sprinklers, misting, fans, or dietary alterations.
- An isolation area is provided for sick animals, and is separated from the calving, fresh cow, and calf areas.
- All animals, including replacement stock, have access to shade in the summer and shelter in the winter.

Feed and Water

Yes No NA

- Animals must receive adequate levels of nutrition for growth and production needs. Rations are formulated and fed to meet NRC (2001) requirements for growth and production.
- Adequate feed bunk space allows for all cows in a pen to eat at the same time, including timid cows.
- When not being milked, lactating cows have continuous access to feed.
- Cows have free access to clean water.
- Water is protected from freezing.
- Waterers are positioned at a convenient height for the animals.

Handling and Transportation

Yes No NA

- Flags and plastic paddles are used during handling of animals to encourage movement. Whips and electric prods are only used when animal or human safety is in jeopardy, and as a last resort.
- Cows are not restrained for more than two hours for routine care and management procedures.
- Loading facilities are designed to avoid animal injuries and facilitate ease of animal movement.
- Transportation is planned to minimize transit time and avoid extreme temperatures.
- Sorting animals according to size prior to transport and using proper loading densities within the transport vehicle are used to minimize stress and injuries during transport.
- Nonambulatory animals are not transported off the dairy to market channels or processing facilities.
- On the dairy, appropriate equipment (sling, sled, or bucket) is used for moving injured or non-ambulatory animals.

Birth and Management of Calves

Yes No NA

- Calving area is clean, dry, well lit, and well-ventilated.
- All calves (bulls and heifers) receive appropriate amounts of quality colostrum.
- Dry, clean housing is provided for calves.
- Calves which are tethered or housed in a small enclosure are able to turn around, lie down and groom themselves.
- Navels are dipped in an appropriate disinfectant soon after birth.
- Only calves with a dry navel and able to walk unassisted are transported off the dairy.
- Calves are moved by walking or lifting them, not by pulling or dragging by body parts such as the ears or tail.