



CARE AND DISPOSITION OF NON-AMBULATORY AND INJURED AMBULATORY CATTLE

STATEMENT

The American Association of Bovine Practitioners believes that all cattle, including non-ambulatory cattle, must be handled humanely in all situations. A veterinarian should be involved in the development of protocols or procedures for the timely assessment, prognosis and implementation of a management plan for each non-ambulatory and injured-ambulatory animal receiving treatment.

DEFINITIONS

- **AABP** American Association of Bovine Practitioners (cattle veterinarians)
- **BOVINE ANIMAL OR CATTLE** any cow, bull, steer, heifer or calf
- **NON-AMBULATORY** disabled or compromised animal unable to rise, stand and/or walk without human assistance
- **“DOWNER”** bovine animal that is non-ambulatory
- **INJURED-AMBULATORY** any bovine animal that, as a result of injury or disease progression, is disabled or compromised and unable to walk normally
- **SAFE AREA** a pen, paddock or other space that provides adequate protection from the elements and predators; this space should have adequate bedding or suitable substrate for footing or traction and access to sufficient amounts of quality feed and water; whenever possible, the area should be separate from other cattle
- **TERMINAL MARKET** a slaughter facility or packing plant
- **NON-TERMINAL MARKET** a market where animals are bought and sold, for example, a sale yard or auction market; a non-terminal market is not a slaughter facility

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-ambulatory cattle with good prognosis

- A non-ambulatory animal with a good prognosis for recovery is typically one that is not in severe distress, does not have a severe injury, is bright and alert, is willing to eat and drink, and makes frequent attempts to rise.
- Such an animal should be housed in a safe area on the premises. If a safe area cannot be provided, then the animal should be

humanely euthanized using an AABP- or American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)-recommended method.

- If a safe area can be provided, the caregiver should provide appropriate nursing care, ideally following a veterinary-derived standard operating procedure. Frequent efforts should be made to shift the animal's body weight to prevent excessive development of nerve or musculoskeletal damage and/or pressure sores.



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- Non-ambulatory cattle receiving treatment should be evaluated by a trained caregiver at least daily, and depending on the situation, more frequently if possible, for evidence of improvement or signs of deterioration.
- If the condition of the animal deteriorates, the prognosis should be re-evaluated by a veterinarian or the attending care team, or the animal should be promptly euthanized by an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method or humanely slaughtered on the premises.

Non-ambulatory cattle with poor prognosis

- A non-ambulatory animal with a poor prognosis for recovery is one that may have one or more of the following factors: be severely injured, in distress, unable to maintain sternal recumbency unassisted, not alert or aware of their surroundings, not eating, demonstrates evidence of dehydration or makes no attempt to rise.
- A non-ambulatory animal with a poor prognosis should be euthanized promptly using an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method or humanely slaughtered on the premises. Only animals that are free of clinical signs associated with neurological or zoonotic diseases and have met all applicable withdrawal times should be considered for slaughter on the premises. Home-slaughtered animals must never enter the public food supply. Animals exhibiting clinical signs of neurologic or zoonotic disease should be evaluated by a veterinarian.

Non-ambulatory cattle on farm/ranch/feedlot

- If the animal is not already in a safe area, then the animal should be moved to a safe area as soon as possible. Non-ambulatory cattle should be handled and moved by qualified personnel in a manner approved by a veterinarian that minimizes stress and trauma while providing assisted support (e.g., bucket, sled or sling) over the shortest distance possible. Movement should not involve dragging unless it is determined to be absolutely necessary by a veterinarian and done according to an approved protocol. Dragging by the head or neck is strictly prohibited.
- Based on a veterinary assessment or an assessment protocol developed in consultation with the herd veterinarian, the prognosis for recovery should be determined and appropriate action taken as soon as possible.
- All non-ambulatory cattle being considered for treatment should be treated as soon as possible using a protocol developed in consultation with the herd veterinarian or receive an assessment by a veterinarian as soon as possible, and no longer than 24 hours after identification.

Non-ambulatory cattle at a non-terminal market

- Based on a veterinary assessment or an assessment protocol developed in consultation with a veterinarian, the prognosis for recovery should be determined and appropriate action taken as soon as possible.



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- If prognosis allows, treatment should only be initiated if facilities and qualified personnel are available to develop and carry out a care plan. If it is determined that the appropriate personnel or care is not available, or the animal has a poor prognosis, then the animal should be euthanized using an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method.

Non-ambulatory cattle at a terminal market

- A non-ambulatory animal at a terminal market must be promptly euthanized using an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method.
- A non-ambulatory animal euthanized at a terminal market must not enter the food supply. (*9 Code of Federal Regulations §309.2*)

Injured ambulatory cattle

- Injured-ambulatory cattle with musculoskeletal injuries such as fractured limbs (broken legs) or severe lameness which renders the animal unable to bear weight on the affected limb(s) while standing or walking, are NOT fit for transport and should NOT leave the premises of origin unless being transported to a facility for veterinary attention. If treatment is not an option, the animal should be euthanized promptly using an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method, or humanely slaughtered on the premises. Only animals that are free of neurological and/or zoonotic disease symptoms and

have met all applicable drug withdrawal times should be considered for at-home slaughter.

- Injured-ambulatory cattle that are able to bear weight on all limbs should be treated under the supervision of a veterinarian and, where possible, housed separately from other cattle on the premises. If treatment is not an option, and the animal is deemed fit for transport as defined by AABP guidelines, then the animal should be shipped directly to a state or federally inspected slaughter plant, or to a custom slaughter facility individually or in a separate compartment. To prevent further injury, the animal should not be commingled with other animals. Precautions should be taken to minimize the risk of further injury and suffering during transport (such as the provision of deep bedding in the trailer). Care should be taken during loading, unloading and handling of injured ambulatory cattle to prevent further injury. If shipment to a facility cannot be arranged, the animal should be promptly euthanized by an AABP- or AVMA-recommended method or humanely slaughtered on the premises. Only animals that are free of neurological and/or zoonotic disease symptoms and have met all applicable drug withdrawal times should be considered for at-home slaughter.