

# AABP POSITION STATEMENT



## **AABP position statement on the care of non-ambulatory and injured ambulatory cattle**

### **STATEMENT:**

**The AABP believes that all cattle, including non-ambulatory cattle, be handled humanely in all situations. A veterinarian should be involved whenever possible in the timely assessment, prognosis, and implementation of the management plan for each non-ambulatory and injured ambulatory animal.**

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**AABP:** American Association of Bovine Practitioners (Cattle Veterinarians)

**Bovine animal or cattle:** any cow, bull or calf

**Non-ambulatory:** a disabled animal unable to rise, stand or walk normally unassisted

**'Downer':** a bovine animal that is non-ambulatory

**Injured ambulatory:** any bovine animal that is otherwise healthy (free from systemic metabolic or infectious disease) that as a result of injury is disabled and unable to walk normally

**Safe area:** a pen or paddock or other space that provides protection from the elements, predators and other animals, where a non-ambulatory cow is provided with a comfortable bed, food, water, and care.

**Terminal market:** a terminal market is a slaughter facility or packing plant.

**Non-terminal market:** a non-terminal market is one 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:**

#### **1. Non-ambulatory cattle on the farm**

- If the animal must be moved to a safe area, then this should be done as soon as possible by properly trained employees in a manner that minimizes stress and trauma while providing assisted support for the weight of the animal (eg. bucket, sled or sling) over the shortest distance possible and NEVER involve dragging by the head, leg or tail
- Based on the veterinary assessment, the prognosis for recovery should be determined and appropriate action taken as detailed below.

#### **1.1 Non-ambulatory cattle with a good prognosis**

A non-ambulatory cow with a good prognosis for recovery is one that is not in distress, has no severe injury, is bright and alert, continues to eat and drink, and makes frequent attempts to rise.

- If a safe area cannot be provided then the animal should be humanely euthanized immediately using an AVMA approved method
- If a safe area can be provided, the care-giver should provide food, water, bedding, shelter, protection from predators and nursing care
- Non-ambulatory cattle receiving treatment should be evaluated at least twice daily for evidence of improvement or signs of deterioration
- If the condition of the animal deteriorates the prognosis should be re-evaluated OR the cow should be immediately euthanized by an AVMA approved method or humanely slaughtered on the farm



## **AABP position statement on the care of non-ambulatory and injured ambulatory cattle (*continued*)**

### **1.2 Non-ambulatory cattle with a poor prognosis**

A non-ambulatory cow with a poor prognosis for recovery is one that is severely injured, or one that is in distress, or is not alert or aware of her surroundings, is not eating or drinking, makes no attempt to rise and may appear unconscious.

- A non-ambulatory cow with a poor prognosis should be euthanized immediately using AVMA approved methods or humanely slaughtered on the farm

### **2. Non-ambulatory cattle at a non-terminal market**

- The prognosis should be assessed immediately to determine the likelihood for recovery
- If prognosis allows, treatment should only be initiated if facilities and trained personal are available to administer appropriate therapy and nursing care, if not euthanasia using an AVMA approved method is recommended
- If it becomes apparent the cow will not recover, it should be immediately euthanized using an AVMA approved method

### **3. Non-ambulatory cattle at a terminal market**

- A non-ambulatory animal at a terminal market must be immediately euthanized using an AVMA approved method
- A non-ambulatory animal euthanized at a terminal market must not enter the food supply

### **4. Injured ambulatory cattle**

- Injured ambulatory cattle with fractured limbs (broken legs) or non-weight bearing lameness are not fit for transport and should NOT leave the farm of origin unless transported to a hospital for veterinary attention.
- Injured ambulatory cattle should be:
  - treated, OR
  - shipped directly to a state or federally inspected slaughter plant, OR
  - humanely slaughtered on the farm or a custom slaughter facility OR
  - humanely euthanized using an AVMA approved method
- If transported, injured ambulatory cattle should NOT be comingled with other cattle
- Care should be taken during loading, unloading, and handling of injured ambulatory cattle to prevent further injury

(Approved by the AABP Board of Directors, June 2013)