

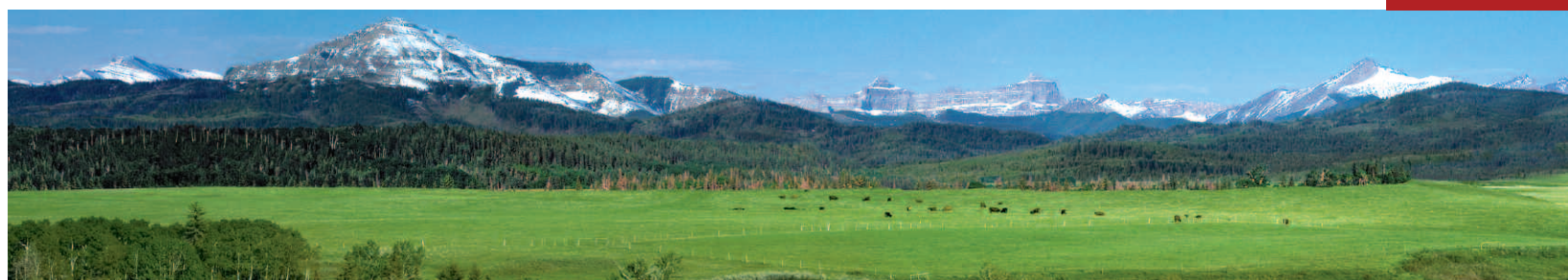
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PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Canada Gold Beef
OIE Guidelines
for
Animal Welfare and
Beef Production

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Recommendations for Animal Welfare and Beef Cattle Production

Reference: Excerpts from OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Report, September 2009

Animal Health Management

- Animal health management is a means to prevent disease and provide treatment for animals when disease occurs. There should be an effective program for disease prevention and treatment established with your herd veterinarian.
- The veterinarian should provide training for signs of common diseases and proper procedures for administration of vaccines and treatments, humane euthanasia of cattle, and handling of compromised cattle.
- There should be regular monitoring of cattle for signs of disease.

Environment

- Animal handlers should be aware of heat stress and those animals at high risk e.g. black hided cattle, fat cattle.
 - When the thermal heat index is high, cattle should be provided with shade, drinking water, sprinkling water to penetrate hair coat. Routine daily procedures should be done early in the day or later at night.
- Animal handlers should be aware of cold stress and provide cattle with protection from wind/rain where practical and ensure cattle have access to adequate feed and water.
- Cattle should be provided with good air quality.
- Cattle should not be exposed to sudden or loud noises to reduce stress and fear reactions.

Nutrition

- Cattle should be provided with a level of nutrition to meet or exceed their maintenance requirements.
- Cattle should have access to adequate feed and palatable water to meet their physiological needs.
- Feedstuffs and feed ingredients should be of satisfactory quality to meet nutritional needs.
- Animal handlers should understand causes of digestive upsets and consult with a nutritionist for advice on ration formulation and feeding programs.

Flooring and bedding

- Cattle need a comfortable place to rest.
- Mud depth should not consistently be deeper than the ankles of cattle in pens.
- Slope of pens should be maintained to allow water to run off away from the feed bunks and not pool excessively in the pens.
- If slope is not sufficient to allow for proper drainage, a mound should be constructed in each pen to allow cattle to have a dry place to lie down.
- Pens should be cleaned thoroughly after each production cycle.
- Bedding should be maintained to allow animals a dry and comfortable place to lie.

Social environment

- In the case of buller animals, they should be identified and removed from the pen immediately. Beef producers should utilize management practices to reintroduce these animals. If reintroduction fails these animals will have to be housed separately from the pen mates. Animal handlers should work to feed cattle of the same size and age in the same pens. Depending on feeding systems, health status of the animals and size of the animals beef producer will need to allow adequate feeder space and water access for the cattle.
- Adequate fencing should be provided to minimize any animal welfare problems that may be caused by mixing of inappropriate groups of cattle.

Stocking Density

- Stocking density should be managed such that crowding does not adversely impact key components of normal behaviour of cattle. These include the ability to lie down freely without the risk of injuries, move freely around the pen and access feed and water. Stocking density should also be managed such that weight gain is not adversely affected by crowding.

Weaning

- There are different weaning strategies utilised in the beef cattle production systems. These could include abrupt separation, fence line separation and the use of devices placed in the nose of the calf to discourage suckling.
- Special care should be taken if abrupt weaning is immediately followed by transportation off farm as research has shown that calves are at risk of increased morbidity under these circumstances.

Painful husbandry Procedures

- Surgical husbandry practices that have the potential to cause pain are routinely practiced on cattle for reasons of production efficiency, animal health and welfare and human safety. Where possible, these procedures should be performed in such a way as to minimize any pain and stress on the animal. Options to consider including the performing the procedure at as early an age as possible or where appropriate use of analgesia.

i) Castration

- Castration of beef cattle is performed in many production systems to reduce inter-animal aggression, improve human safety, remove the risk of unwanted pregnancies in the herd, and enhance production efficiency by producing beef that better meets market requirements.
- Where it is necessary to castrate beef cattle, producers should seek guidance from veterinarians as to the optimum method and timing for their type of cattle and production system.
- Methods of castration used in beef cattle include surgical (knife) removal of the testes, ischaemic methods (banding or ringing), and crushing of the spermatic cord (burdizzo operation).
- Where practical, cattle should be castrated before the age of 3 months, or at the first available handling opportunity beyond this age.
- Producers should seek guidance from veterinarians on the availability and advisability of analgesia/anaesthesia for castration of beef cattle, particularly in older animals.
- Operators performing castration of beef cattle should be trained and competent in the procedure used, and be able to recognise the signs of complications.

ii) Dehorning

- Beef cattle which are naturally horned are commonly dehorned in order to reduce animal injuries and hide damage, improve human safety, and facilitate transport and handling. Where practical and appropriate for the production system, the selection of polled cattle can remove the need for dehorning.
- Where it is necessary to dehorn beef cattle, producers should seek guidance from veterinarians as to the optimum method and timing for their type of cattle and production system.
- Where practical, cattle should be dehorned while horn development is still at the horn bud stage, or at the first available handling opportunity beyond this age. This is because the procedure involves less tissue trauma when horn development is still at the horn bud stage, and there is no attachment of horn to the skull of the animal.
- Methods of dehorning at the horn bud stage include removal of the horn buds with a knife, thermal cautery of the horn buds, or the application of chemical paste to cauterise the horn buds. Methods of dehorning when horn development has commenced involve the removal through of the horn cutting or sawing at the base of the horn close to the skull.
- Producers should seek guidance from veterinarians on the availability and advisability of analgesia/anaesthesia for dehorning of beef cattle, particularly in older animals.

Identification

- Ear-tagging, ear-notching, tattooing, freeze branding and radio frequency identification devices (RFID) are preferred methods of permanently identifying beef cattle from an animal welfare stand point. In some situations however hot iron branding may be required or be the only practical method of permanent identifying beef cattle. If cattle are branded, it should be accomplished quickly, expertly and with the proper equipment.

Handling and Inspection

- Beef cattle should be inspected at intervals appropriate to the production systems and the risks to the health and welfare of the animals.
- Some animals may benefit from more frequent inspection for example: neonatal calves, cows in late gestation, newly weaned calves, and cattle experiencing environmental stress and after painful husbandry or veterinary surgical procedures.
- Animal handlers need to be competent in recognising the clinical signs of health, disease and welfare of beef cattle.
- Beef cattle identified as sick or injured should be given appropriate treatment at the first available opportunity. If animal handlers are unable to provide appropriate treatment, then the service of veterinarians should be enlisted.
- If prognosis of the animal condition is poor with little chance of recovery, humane euthanasia of the animal should be considered.
- Where beef cattle are herded into a handling facility from extensive conditions, they should be moved quietly. Weather conditions should be taken into account and cattle should not be herded in excessively hot or cold conditions. Cattle should not be driven to the point of collapse. Properly trained dogs can be effective tools for cattle herding.

Personnel training

- All people responsible for beef cattle should be competent according to their responsibilities and should understand cattle husbandry, behaviour, biosecurity, general signs of disease, and indicators of poor animal welfare such as stress, pain and discomfort, and their alleviation.
- Competence may be gained through formal training and/or practical experience.

Facilities

- All facilities for beef cattle should be constructed, maintained and operated to minimise the risk to the welfare of the animals and human safety.
- Equipment for handling and restraining beef cattle should only be used in a way that minimises the risk of injury, pain or distress.
- Cattle in intensive or extensive production systems must be offered adequate space for comfort, socialization and environmental management.
- In intensive production systems the feeder should be sufficiently large so that animals have adequate access to feed and they should be clean and free of spoiled, moldy, sour, packed or unpalatable feed. Also cattle should have access to clean and clear water at all times.
- Floors in housing facilities should be properly drained, and barns and handling alleys should provide traction to prevent injuries to animals and handlers.
- Handling alleys and housing pens must be free of sharp edges and protrusions to prevent injury to animals and handlers.
- Design and operate alleys and gates to avoid impeding cattle movement. Avoid slippery surfaces, especially where cattle enter a single file alley leading to a chute or where they exit the chute. Grooved concrete, metal grating (not sharp), rubber mats or deep sand can be used to minimize slipping and falling. Quiet handling is essential to minimize slipping. When operating gates and catches, reduce excessive noise, which may cause distress to the animals.

- Adjust hydraulic or manual restraining chutes to the appropriate size of cattle to be handled. Regular cleaning and maintenance of working parts is imperative to ensure the system functions properly and is safe for the cattle and handlers.
- Mechanical and electrical devices used in housing facilities must be safe for animals and humans.

Humane Killing

- A prompt diagnosis should be made to determine whether the animal should be humanely killed or receive additional care.
- Animal handlers should provide feed and water to non-ambulatory cattle at least once daily.
- Non-ambulatory animals should be moved very carefully and dragging non-ambulatory animals is unacceptable.
- Likewise, animals should not be lifted with chains onto transportation conveyances. Acceptable methods of transporting non-ambulatory animals include a sled, low-boy trailer or in the bucket of a loader.
- When treatment is attempted, cattle that are unable to sit up unaided and refuse to eat or drink should be humanely euthanized as soon as recovery is deemed not possible.
- Cattle that are non-ambulatory must not be sent live to a livestock market or to a processing facility.
- Humane killing should occur without pain or suffering.
- The decision to humanely kill an animal and the procedure itself should be undertaken by a competent person.

- **Reasons for euthanasia may include:**
 - severe emaciation, weak cattle that are non-ambulatory or at risk of becoming downers;
 - non-ambulatory cattle that will not sit up, refuse to eat or drink, have not responded to therapy;
 - rapid deterioration of a medical condition for which therapies have been unsuccessful;
 - severe, debilitating pain;
 - compound (open) fracture;
 - spinal injury;
 - central nervous system disease; and
 - multiple joint infections with chronic weight loss.