

WVMA Guiding Principles for Food Animal Welfare

Disabled cattle

Guiding principle: The WVMA recognizes disabled cattle prognosis and treatment plan development as a vital aspect of the veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) on every dairy farm. Disabled cattle should be examined by a veterinarian in a timely manner to determine a prognosis and treatment plan for the individual animal. Disabled cattle need to be handled humanely in all situations. When moving down cows they should be placed on a suitable surface that prevents direct and indirect injury to the animal while being moved.

Ambulatory Cattle

If an otherwise healthy bovine animal has been recently injured, and the animal is ambulatory, it should be treated, shipped directly to a state or federally inspected slaughter plant, humanely slaughtered on the farm or euthanized.

Injured ambulatory animals should not be

co-mingled with other animals during transport. Care should be taken during loading, unloading, and handling of these animals to prevent further injury or stress.

Non-ambulatory Cattle

Non-ambulatory animals must not be dragged mechanically with direct attachment to body parts while alive to avoid direct damage to the animal. If at all possible the animal should be rolled or slid onto a suitable surface by means of reasonable manual force aided with simple devices (block and tackle pulleys or manual hand ratcheting winches) which will carry the animal while being moved. Once secured on a movable surface the animal can be moved without causing indirect injury from surface friction. Every effort should be made to prevent further injury.

If a bovine animal is down on a farm

If the animal is not in extreme distress the producer should contact a veterinarian in a timely manner to determine prognosis and treatment plan. The producer should move the cow humanely to a suitable location and provide

food, water, shelter, and appropriate nursing care to keep the animal comfortable until the veterinarian arrives.

If the animal is in extreme distress and the condition is obviously irreversible, the animal should be euthanized immediately or humanely slaughtered on the farm.

If a bovine animal is down at a non-terminal market (e.g., sale yard or auction)

If the animal is not in extreme distress, but is disabled, the market management should contact a veterinarian to determine a prognosis and treatment plan. If and when it becomes apparent the animal will not recover, it should be euthanized.

If the animal is in extreme distress or the condition is obviously irreversible, the animal should be euthanized immediately.

If a bovine animal is down at a terminal market (e.g., slaughterhouse or packing plant)

The animal should be euthanized immediately.

Euthanasia of food animals

Guiding principle: Veterinarians are a valuable asset to help make timely euthanasia decisions. Considerations that make euthanasia the best available option are incurable conditions, the likelihood of treatment failure, potential for animal suffering and presence of drug residues. The decision to euthanize a food animal should be made as soon as the fore mentioned conditions are recognized, and implemented in a timely manner to minimize animal suffering.

The WVMA recognizes developing and implementing a euthanasia plan, when needed, as a vital aspect of the veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) on every dairy farm. Veterinarians have an obligation to help protect animal welfare which includes involvement in euthanasia decisions.

Most individuals and veterinarians who work with livestock will encounter situations where an animal is unlikely to respond favorably to treatment. The likelihood of treatment failure, potential for animal suffering and presence of drug residues are some considerations that can make euthanasia the best available option.

Develop a plan

Veterinarians should work with personnel at locations housing or handling animals to develop an action plan for animals in situations that require euthanasia. This action plan should include indications for euthanasia and criteria to consider in the decision making process.

An appropriate method of euthanasia should be selected based on animal welfare, human safety, practicality and skill of the individual performing the euthanasia.

When a euthanasia decision is made, implementation should be made in a timely manner. Leaving terminally ill animals in significant

pain, waiting for the rendering service to arrive, is unacceptable.

Proper implementation of the plan requires training of the individuals involved in the decision making and euthanasia method. Annual review of the euthanasia action plan is recommended.

An excellent resource for the development of a euthanasia plan and training of the individuals involved has been developed by the Animal Welfare Committee of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners and can be found at www.aabp.org/resources/euth.pdf. This pamphlet provides detailed descriptions of the decision making process and acceptable euthanasia methods.

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On farm surgery by non-licensed personnel

Guiding principle: Surgery on food producing animals should be limited to licensed veterinarians.

It is in the best interest of the cow, the public and the producer to have licensed veterinarians perform surgery.

It is illegal

The law clearly states that surgery on an animal is limited to licensed veterinarians (VE 7.02(1)(c)).

It is unethical

Training non-licensed personnel to perform surgery is not ethical. Such training is not within the realm of a reasonable veterinarian/client/patient/relationship. Doing so goes against the Veterinarian's Oath and the American Veterinary Medical Association's Code of Ethics. It is unethical for a veterinarian to pri-

oritize client's economic concerns over animal care and welfare.

Public expectation

Veterinarians have been entrusted by the public to ensure that the animal products it consumes and uses are wholesome and are produced humanely. Society grants monopolies to health professionals through the licensing process because it recognizes the special value of maintaining a standard of care. Veterinarians have training in anatomy, pathology, pharmacology and surgery and have experience in observation, diagnosis and treatment of food animals; their involvement fulfills the public's expectation.

Animal welfare

Surgery by a person without a veterinary license is not in the best interest of the cow. The lack of understanding and appreciation of

sterile technique can jeopardize survival rates of the patients. Veterinarians have a better understanding of the affects that concurrent diseases have on surgery recovery, and tailor the treatment plans for cows with multiple problems. Non-licensed persons also have little or no training in pain management and pharmacology.

It is not sound business

On-farm treatment protocols that step from "on-farm" diagnosis to surgery without veterinary intervention may be performing unnecessary surgery. The diagnosis needs to be confirmed by a veterinarian and a specific treatment plan made. Each cow has unique needs. Surgery may not even be the best course of action. Proper medical and surgical management should be tailored by a licensed veterinarian to optimize the outcome.

Pain management

Guiding principle: The WVMA recognizes pain control, prevention and treatment as a vital aspect of the veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) on every dairy farm. Veterinarians are urged to educate their clients and themselves about recognizing acute

and chronic pain signs and relieving it through management, optimally designed housing and medication.

The WVMA believes that animal pain and suffering are clinically important conditions that adversely affect animals.

Herd animals such as cows, sheep

and pigs, are adept at masking their pain signs. Astute observation and research verify that these animals do feel pain. It is manifested in subtle postural changes, locomotion changes, lack of appetite, teeth grinding, various vocalizations, and certain avoidance behaviors.

Until such time that a pain scale is scientifically developed, all

veterinarians are urged to educate their clients and themselves about recognizing acute and chronic pain signs, with emphasis on relieving it through management, optimally designed housing, and medication.

Whenever possible, the WVMA suggests the use of preoperative pain relievers, as this approach has proven beneficial in humans and companion animals.

Tail docking

Guiding principle: The Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association opposes the routine tail docking of cattle. Current scientific literature indicates that routine tail docking provides no benefit to the animal.

The WVMA recognizes that tail docking is utilized on some Wisconsin dairy farms as a means to improve cow cleanliness and udder health. However, current scientific research evaluating the effectiveness of tail docking to achieve these goals has shown no correlation of tail docking with improvements in cow cleanliness or udder health.

The WVMA recognizes cow comfort, cleanliness and udder health as vital aspects of the veterinarian client patient relationship (VCPR) on dairy farms. Management practices such as stall design, cleaning schedule, stocking density, and bedding management are significant factors affecting cow cleanliness and udder health. Veterinarians should assist dairy

farmers in reviewing existing management practices and identifying new practices if needed that will improve these areas of dairy cow well being.

When medically necessary, amputation of tails must be performed by a licensed veterinarian utilizing proper pain management.