

Care Wellness & Training

Training Talker...

Non-Ambulatory “Down” Cow Management

Producers need written protocols for non-ambulatory animals. We need to treat them as medical emergencies.



COMMON CAUSES 5Ms

- M MILK FEVER**
Symptoms: dull/weak; trembling/twitching; temperature below 101F; cold, droopy ears
- M TOXIC MASTITIS**
Symptoms: dull/weak; temperature extremes (high or low); sunken eyes; abnormal milk; heat, pain and swelling of one or more quarters
- M TOXIC METRITIS**
Symptoms: dull/weak; temperature extremes (high or low); sunken eyes; watery, colored or cloudy vaginal discharge and odor
- M MUSCULOSKELETAL DAMAGE**
Symptoms: abnormal angle and/or swelling to limb; suspect fracture or dislocation; paralysis
- M MASSIVE INFECTION**
Symptoms: dull/depressed; sunken eyes; temperature extremes (high or low); difficulty breathing

Dairy animals are at greater risk of becoming non-ambulatory around the transition period before and after calving. Causes for a cow to become non-ambulatory include metabolic illnesses such as ketosis and hypocalcemia, infectious diseases such as mastitis and metritis, and other disorders like dystocia or hoof and leg injuries. The added stress on the animal at the beginning of lactation makes her more prone to health issues that could result in her becoming non-ambulatory. Studies have shown that 1 in 3 dairy cows may be affected by some form of metabolic or infectious disease in early lactation (LeBlanc, 2010).

All cows must stand now and then to restore normal blood flow in their leg muscles. When a cow is unable to stand for an extended period of time, she is likely to experience permanent muscle damage. Cows that remain recumbent or down for greater than 24 hours are prone to secondary tissue damage. This can include pressure damage to nerves in the fore limbs and hind limbs, and induced necrosis in the hind limb muscles (Merck, 2022). As a result, even if the primary cause for the animal to be non-ambulatory is resolved, the animal may remain involuntarily recumbent due to this tissue damage (Merck, 2022). The pressure-induced tissue damage can be exacerbated if the animal remains lying on a hard surface such as concrete or pavement.

If an animal becomes non-ambulatory, prompt diagnosis should be made in consultation with the herd veterinarian to determine why the animal is unable to stand, and whether the animal should receive additional care or should be humanely euthanized. When treatment is given, but the animal is unable to sit up without assistance and refuses to eat or drink for more than 24 hours, humane euthanasia should be considered (Green, 2008).

Non-Ambulatory

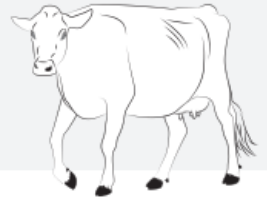
If an animal must be moved to another location, special equipment large enough to move a cow safely and humanely should be used. This can include equipment such as a sled made from a sheet of plywood, rubber matting, or use of a large skid loader bucket.

Remember: NEVER drag a cow (FARM, 2022).



ASSIST THE COW TO STAND IF
a physical exam and initial treatment
have been completed and she:

- ✓ Is bright and alert
- ✓ Is not severely trembling or twitching
- ✓ Does not have evidence of severe disease
- ✓ Does not appear severely weak
- ✓ Appears to have normal and functioning limbs



Movement with a Sled



Movement with a Bucket



Prompt Attention & Protection

Prompt is defined as immediate (as soon as they are identified as non-ambulatory)

Feed and water must be available at all times and within reach of the downed animal.

The animal must be provided protection from the elements with presence of shade, wind breaks and protection from predators.

Non-ambulatory animals, regardless of age, must be segregated from ambulatory animals by housing them in a separate pen or, at minimum, creating a temporary barrier that prevents ambulatory animals from making contact with the non-ambulatory animal.



Improper Movement





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**Check us out at
www.dairyworks.com**

DairyWorks is an independently owned company interested in making evaluations, documentation, and employee training as simple and streamlined as possible in order for dairy owners, managers and employees to get back to doing what they do best – making quality milk from well- cared for cows!

DairyWorks wants to be the conduit between you and your animal welfare certifications. We are agents of animal welfare, trained and certified in the FARM program with extensive knowledge and experience in other animal welfare certifications. We are participants in continuing education to ensure compliancy in the aforementioned programs. Let us take care of the compliancy paperwork and documentation so you can take care of your cows, enjoy dairying and ensure the public quality milk products!

**Annual Training
Requirements for
Dairy Producers:**

**Completion of this training counts for your
Annual Training Requirement!**

- *Pre-Weaned Calf Care*
- *Non-Ambulatory Care*
- *Determining Fitness to Transport*
- * *Euthanasia*
- *Cattle Handling and Stockmanship*
- *Cow Care Agreements*

Dairy Name: _____

Date	Name	Signature

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