

Transport and Care of Cattle

FACT SHEET – FOR CATTLE AT SALEYARDS

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Having bought cattle from the saleyard or through a private sale you need to ensure that you are prepared and able to provide adequate transport to the new property. It is important that you can care for the cattle and provide a healthy environment for them to graze. This brochure provides some basic information regarding your obligations towards your cattle more detailed information is available in the Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Cattle (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare).

Transporting cattle and calves:

Key things to remember:

- The size and design of the transport vehicle should be compatible with the number of stock being transported.
- The transport vehicle should be in good repair to ensure cattle arrive at their destination with least injury and in the shortest possible time.
- The stock crate should be well designed so as to minimise bruising. A well designed stock crate will have a large smooth contact surface without projections on which animals can bruise.
- Pens should be approximately 3 metres in length (pens should not be longer than 4 metres) to provide more support to animals during travel and thus reduce stress and allow them to adapt to transport more readily.

It is recommended that the following classes be transported or penned separately:

- polled & dehorned cattle;
- young calves;
- a cow with a suckling calf;
- adult bulls;
- cattle greatly different in size;
- females in advanced stages of pregnancy

Special requirements for transporting bobby calves:

- A livestock transport trailer/truck is the preferred method.
- Front of trailer should be solid to protect calves from the wind.
- All bobby calves should be fed on the farm within 6 hours of transportation for sale.
- Where possible bobby calves should be transported by the shortest route.
- Transport operators should check calves en route at least once every three hours.



- Bobby calves should be loaded at a density so as to allow all calves to lie down while being transported.
- Bobby calves shall be transported in separate compartments from other classes of stock.

DO NOT:

- Transport calves in a car boot, sealed container or anything that restricts airflow.
- Tie the legs of the calves in order to restrain them.
- Overload the transport vehicle – you may need to make two trips or find a bigger transport vehicle.

Speak to your stock agent if transport is required for your new purchase.

Caring for your cattle:

Handling facilities:

It is important to make sure you have adequate facilities to unload the cattle when you get them back to your property. A set of yards or a small paddock to confine the cattle for the first couple of days is essential.

Holding the cattle in a small paddock or set of yards for the first couple of days will help to settle and calm them. It may also help prevent the spread of weeds and disease to your property. This initial step is important for the biosecurity of your property.

Feed and water requirements on arrival:

The holding paddock or yard must have a supply of water that is accessible to all animals. It would also be a good place to introduce your cattle to some hay, in order to settle them after the transport.

When you finally introduce your cattle to the larger paddock, it is best to continue giving hay for at least the first 2 days, so that their rumen (stomach) has time to adjust gradually to the pasture feed.

General Feed and water requirements

When pasture is short or of low quality (such as summer pasture), supplementation is necessary to maintain desired weight or condition and support growth, pregnancy and lactation. Hand feeding is often needed during autumn, winter and summer depending on seasonal conditions and during late pregnancy and lactation.

Water

Ensure safe water is always available. Generally the water requirements for cattle are:

- ✓ Dry cows
- 70 litres/day
- ✓ Lactating cows (cow with calf at foot)
- 90 litres/day
- ✓ Weaner calf (animal removed from its mother)
- 55 litres/day.

These values will vary with weather conditions, and it is not unusual for a pregnant cow with calf at foot to drink over 150 litres of water per day. As summer progresses, dams start to

shrink, and evaporation can account for up to a metre of water loss from a dam each day.

Assessment of the health of the cattle:

While the cattle are being held in the yards/ small paddock use the opportunity to assess them (i.e., before you put them out on your paddocks). The most important things to look for are:

- any injuries that might have occurred during transport
- lameness or uneven gait
- making sure any calves are feeding on their mothers before you let them out into a paddock to graze.

Diseases of cattle:

Table 1. Common diseases of cattle.

Diseases	Description For more information go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming , then click on 'Animals & Livestock' and then 'Cattle'
Clostridial (Bacterial) diseases	Clostridial organisms cause a variety of diseases including blackleg, pulpy kidney, blacks disease and tetanus. These organisms are found in the soil, where they can survive for a very long time. Clostridial diseases are usually fatal. Prevention is easily achieved by vaccinating the cattle. For further information please refer to Agnote: Clostridial diseases of sheep and cattle
Liver fluke and worms	Liver fluke and worms are internal parasites that can cause severe production losses and death in stock. All cattle, especially young stock, can be infested with worms which can be fatal, though often results in reduced production. Control is achievable by conducting faecal egg counts and treating with target specific drench/s when required. Cattle drench can be purchased from your local livestock feed supplier or veterinarian. For further information please refer to Agnote: Control of liver fluke
Bloat	Bloat is a seasonal problem caused by an increase in the gas pressure within the rumen (stomach) as feeds are fermented. Death results from the pressure causing heart and lung failure. The condition is usually precipitated by the rapid consumption of lush legume pasture species (especially clover and lucerne) in spring. For information on prevention and treatment please refer to Agnote: Bloat Prevention in Pasture Fed Beef Cattle
Grass Tetany	Grass tetany is seen mostly in lactating cows in winter and early spring. The disorder is associated with low levels of magnesium in the blood (hypomagnesemia) and cerebrospinal fluid around the brain. Symptoms of grass tetany include nervous signs including initial excitement, bellowing, muscle spasms, tetany, convulsions and sudden death. For more information refer to Agnote: Grass Tetany (Hypomagnesemia) in beef cattle
Pink Eye	Pink-eye is mainly a disease of young cattle. Signs of pinkeye include; copious watery eye discharge, aversion to sunlight, signs of irritation (for example, excessive blinking), and reddening and swelling of the eyelids and the third eyelid. For information on disease spread and treatment refer to Agnote: Pink-eye in beef cattle
Scours in calves	Scouring is the result of changed gut function which increases the amount of manure and fluids the calf passes. The amount of water passed in a scouring calf can be 20 times normal. The most important method of prevention is to provide adequate colostrum in the first few hours after birth. Providing adequate housing or shelter from the weather to reduce stress is very important because stress encourages the development of scours. For the treatment of scours seek veterinarian advise immediately. For more information please refer to Agnote: Diseases of young dairy calves
Bovine Johne's Disease	Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) is a bacterial wasting disease of cattle. The prevention and control of this disease is complex. For more information please refer to Agnote: Bovine Johne's Disease

Special consideration for calves

As a general rule a newborn calf is like a baby. Calves need to be fed milk for a minimum of the first three months of their lives, but the longer the better. During the final two months, pasture should be made available. Calves require at least two litres of milk per day as newborns *and* access to clean drinking water. Many problems can arise with bottle reared calves, but the risks decrease as the calf grows.

If you don't have a lot of experience with rearing calves, call a veterinarian immediately if any problems, such as scouring (a persistent yellow coloured diarrhoea), arise. Milk replacers can be purchased from your local livestock feed supplier. For further information please refer to the Agnote: [Calf rearing](#) which covers all facets of the care and management of calves (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming then click on 'Animals & Livestock' and then 'Cattle').

Property Identification:

All owners of cattle must register their property with Department of Primary Industries to receive a Property Identification Code (PIC). For more information please call 1800 678 779.

Please remember that cattle require ongoing supervision and maintenance to stay healthy.

For more information about transport and care of cattle contact: please consult your private veterinarian or local DPI Animal Health staff via the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or email customer@dpi.vic.gov.au, or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare and follow links to Animal Welfare information notes.