

CALF HANDLING AND STOCKMANSHIP

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

TEMPLATE AND GUIDELINES



GUIDING PRINCIPLE: Calves and heifers handled with gentleness and patience are more likely to perceive their surroundings and caregivers with trust, which makes subsequent human-animal interactions more likely to be efficient, safe and humane.

SOP TEMPLATE

Following the Dairy Care 365 “Calf Handling and Stockmanship” module guidelines (pages 5-6), use this template and work with your veterinarian to develop a customized SOP for your dairy or calf ranch. Communicate the SOP details to appropriate employees and have available for easy reference. Review and update the SOP at least annually.

Dairy name: _____

Address: _____

Owner / Manager: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

Veterinarian: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

MOVING CALVES OUT OF HUTCHES / NURSERY (See Guidelines section 1.)

- Protocol for moving calves out of hutches / nursery to the group pen:
 - a. If using a trailer to move calves, protocol should include guidelines for loading and unloading.
 - b. Protocol should include adding bedding / grit to trailer, as well as to any area that might be slick.

FIRST _____ DAYS IN THE GROUP (See Guidelines section 2.)

- Protocol for walking the pen, including:
 - a. Ensure that all calves know where the feed and water are and are willing to walk to it.
 - b. Assess health so that sick calves are detected and treated in a timely manner.
 - c. Build confidence in the calves so that they do not perceive humans as a threat.

SUBSEQUENT _____ DAYS IN THE GROUP PEN (See Guidelines section 2.)

- Protocol for walking the pen (even if only for a few minutes)

ISOLATING A CALF FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT (See Guidelines section 3.)

- Protocol for how to restrain calves for diagnosis and treatment

MOVING AND WORKING GROUPS OF CALVES (See Guidelines section 4.)

- Protocol for moving groups of calves

SORTING CALVES (See Guidelines section 5.)

- Protocol for sorting calves

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Owner / Manager signature: _____ Date: _____

Veterinarian signature: _____ Date: _____

Date SOP created: _____ Date SOP last revised: _____

1 MOVING CALVES OUT OF HUTCHES / NURSERY

- May need to adjust your behavior.
 - a. Keep in mind that the hutch has been the calf's home and place of safety. Everything that happens on that day will be new and seen by the calf as a potential threat. It is EXTRA important to be patient and calm for this task.
- Load calves from hutches or nursery to the trailer.
 - a. Prepare calf footing along route. Having good footing is important to prevent injuries.
 - If calves will be walking across concrete, put something like sawdust, sand or lime on the concrete to increase traction. Calves will run and jump playfully when exposed to a new area.
 - Be sure the trailer is well bedded for good traction.
 - b. Offer the calf the opportunity to decide to take the step onto the trailer. Gently swipe your hand down the spine from front to back to encourage forward movement.
- Unload calves from the trailer.
 - a. Start at the back door of the trailer and work into the group slowly – encouraging just a few calves to step off at a time.
 - b. Work up and back the length of the trailer to encourage the other calves to follow.

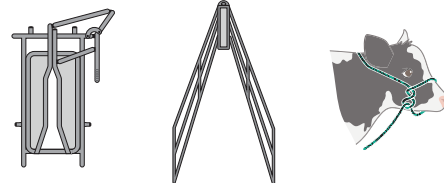
2 WALKING PENS

- To keep calves healthy and growing, walk pens regularly after they arrive to the group pens.
 - a. Enter the pen through the back side (away from the feed bunk).
 - Use good stockmanship and walk calmly to build confidence in the calves so they do not perceive you as a threat.
 - b. Calmly walk the group of calves toward the feed bunk by applying gentle pressure to the back of the group, working a zig-zag pattern to ensure all calves know where the feed bunk is.
- As you move calves, do a head-to-tail assessment of their health.
 - a. If calves have just been fed, focus your attention on the calves that are not eating.
 - b. If calves have not been recently fed, walk calmly and slowly through the group to determine which animals need to be sorted out and further evaluated. Leave the calves at the feed bunk and exit the pen through the back.
- Treat sick calves immediately and record treatment.

3 ISOLATING A CALF FOR DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

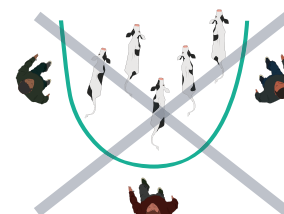
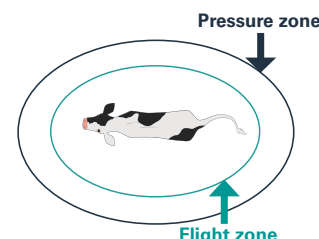
- Arrange for two people to complete the task to avoid injuring or overly exciting people or calves.
- Prepare proper restraint for assessing and treating calves.

- a. Examples of proper restraint include: a head catch, a gate, a halter or a portable treatment chute.
- b. Ideally, a scale should be available to ensure that medications are dosed correctly.



4 MOVING AND WORKING GROUPS OF CALVES

- When moving calves out of a pen, enter the pen from the gate through which you want the calves to leave.
- Stay in their pressure zone (outside line) but out of their flight zone (inside line), to reduce stress on the animals while still controlling their movement.
- Position yourself to the side of calves (out of the blind spot) so they can see you.
- Working together, employees should position themselves in a line that is perpendicular to the direction that they want the calves to move. That is, a line drawn perpendicular to the line of people should point toward the gate. This is called "T to the gate."
 - a. After you have formed the line, walk back and forth on the imaginary line to pressure the calves to move.
 - b. As the calves move forward, move the line closer to the group to keep the movement flowing. It is important for the people to keep their line straight. If the people form a "U," then some of them will be in front of some of the calves and impede movement.
 - c. If the calves move to the gate but will not start to go through it, one person can move to the front of the calves to start them through the gate.



5 SORTING CALVES

- This is a one-person job.
- If possible, move the calves to an alley or smaller area for sorting.
- Sort calves slowly by allowing one calf at a time to turn and walk past the sorter.
- Apply pressure to the side, one calf at a time.
- As the calf turns past the sorter, read the ear tag.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DAIRY CARE 365, CONTACT YOUR MERCK ANIMAL HEALTH REPRESENTATIVE OR EMAIL DAIRYCARE365@MERCK.COM.