DAIRY CATTLE EUTHANASIA DECISION TREE

Use the following decision tree to determine if euthanasia should be performed immediately.

Pain: An unpleasant physical sensation occurring in varying degrees of severity because of injury, disease or resulting from a medical or management procedure.

**IS THE ANIMAL EXPERIENCING PAIN, SUFFERING OR DEBILITATING INJURY OR DISEASE?**

**YES**

- Can you effectively treat or manage the ailment? **AND**
- Can you afford follow-up care or management?

**YES**

- Treat animal in accordance with your herd health plan and in consultation with your veterinarian; record treatments
- Reevaluate animal regularly until it has recovered

**NO**

- Consider euthanasia by a properly trained individual **AND/OR**
- Consult with veterinarian ASAP
- Refer to Considerations when Transporting Dairy Animals poster if planning to transport.

**NO**

**Is she suffering from any of the listed conditions below?**

**YES**

- Has she been non-ambulatory for 24 hours or more?

**YES**

- Can she sit upright on her own?

**YES**

- Will she eat/drink?

**YES**

- Consider euthanasia by a properly trained individual **AND/OR**
- Consult with veterinarian ASAP

**NO**

- Consider euthanasia by a properly trained individual **AND/OR**
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**RECOMMENDED PRIMARY EUTHANASIA METHODS**

If death is not confirmed following a primary method, a secondary method must be used to complete euthanasia.

1. **Gunshot** using an appropriate firearm, ammunition and anatomic site to cause physical disruption of brain activity by direct destruction of brain tissue.

2. **Penetrating captive bolt (PCB)** to induce unconsciousness in combination with an adjunctive step such as exsanguination, intravenous administration of a saturated solution of either potassium chloride or magnesium sulfate, or pithing (increasing destruction of brain and spinal cord tissue) to ensure death.

3. **Chemical** Intravenous (IV) barbiturate administered by a veterinarian or IV anesthetic agents that render the animal unconscious to allow for a secondary step. Note, these animals should not be rendered.

**Conditions or situations may lead to an animal being compromised to such an extent that euthanasia should be performed immediately:**

- Extended drug withdrawal time for clearance of tissue residue
- INABILITY TO:
  - Maintain sitting upright position with head held up
  - Move and raise front legs once lifted under assistance
  - Stand due to catastrophic fracture, trauma or disease of the limbs, hips or spine
- SUFFERING FROM:
  - Advanced ocular neoplastic conditions (i.e., cancer eye)
  - Age or injury that results in the animal being too compromised for transport or market
  - Chronic pneumonia and difficulty breathing/gasping for air
  - Chronic repeated bloating
  - Conditions with no effective treatment (e.g., Johne’s disease or lymphoma)
  - Disease conditions with cost-prohibitive treatment
  - Diseases with a significant threat to human health (i.e., rabies)
  - Emaciation and/or debilitation from disease
  - Pain and distress that cannot be managed
  - Poor prognosis or prolonged expected recovery
  - Uncontrollable bleeding from a major blood vessel