Euthanasia: The Importance of Protocols & Training

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FARMERS ASSURING RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

“Today’s consumers expect – and deserve safe, wholesome food from people who are producing it responsibly”

Center for Food Integrity: only 25% of consumers agree that animals are treated humanely on US farms
WHAT IS FARM?

• The dairy industry, through National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) with support from Dairy Management, Inc. initiated a voluntary program named FARM: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management in 2009

• Program Goal:
  • Provide reassurance to consumers & customers that dairy farmers raise and care for their animals in a humane and ethical manner.

http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/
PRODUCING FOOD RESPONSIBLY

• FARM offers a **continuous improvement** process to ensure a high level of on-farm animal care.

• FARM sets the highest standards, through best management practices, that inspire dairy farmers to do things better.
WHO MAKES DECISIONS ABOUT FARM?

• The FARM Program is updated every 3 years by the FARM Technical Writing Group comprised of:
  • Academics
  • Veterinarians
  • Cooperative staff
  • Farmers
FARM PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Best Management Practices

Second-Party Evaluations
- Pre-Interview
- Interview Questions
- Animal Observations
- Closing Interview
- Follow-up; Action Plans

Third-Party Verification

http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/

@farmprogram

#FARMProud
PROMOTING: BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Created by Technical Writing Group; updated every 3 years

- Cover all aspects of cow’s life

- Suite of complimentary materials that cover topics within both beef and dairy

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VERSION 3.0 PRIORITY AREAS

PHASE ONE

Veterinary Client Patient Relationship
- Official form signed by Veterinarian of Record
- Updated annually

Dairy Cattle Care Ethics & Training Form
- Signed by all employees with animal care responsibilities
- Updated and signed annually
- Indicates:
  - Received training in stockmanship AND area of responsibility;
  - Will not abuse animals/Will report any mistreatment that occurs

No Tail Docking
VERSION 3.0 PRIORITY AREAS

PHASE TWO

Herd Health Plan
• Protocols for newborn and milk-fed dairy calves.
• Protocols for pain management.
• Protocols and training for non-ambulatory animal management.
• Protocols for euthanasia.

Animal Observations
• Lameness
• Body Condition
• Hock/Knee
HERD HEALTH PLAN COMPONENTS

- Daily observations
- Milking routine and procedures
- Vaccination protocols
- Common disease treatment
- Treatment protocols specifying age, class, product and route of administration

- Culling and transport to slaughter
- Diseased/injured cattle management
- Lameness prevention and treatment
- Dystocia management
- Parasite, pest and fly control
- Air quality
BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

• Intend to give our animals every opportunity to perform to her genetic potential with emphasis on the quality of life.

• Ensure comfortable environment and proper care
  • Nutrition programs
  • Vaccination programs
  • Comfortable housing
DIFFICULT DECISIONS

- Emotional sense of failure
- Not an easy but a necessary
  - Economic burden
- Obligation to protect and provide quality end of life
NON-AMBULATORY ANIMAL PROTOCOL EXAMPLE

1. Owner is called
2. Get the sled
3. Halter on the cow
4. Roll/slide the cow onto sled
5. Tie head to the corner of the sled
6. Carefully/slowly pull the sled to a grassy area (off of concrete)
7. Untie halter and pull cow off of the sled onto dirt
8. Physical exam to determine cause of non-ambulatory condition
EUTHANASIA DECISION TREE

• Is the cow able to maintain herself?
• Is the cow eating and drinking routinely?
• Is the cow able to rest and maintain and upright position?
• If ‘No’ is answered to these questions:
  • Inform owner of need for euthanasia
EUTHANASIA PROTOCOL EXAMPLES

1. Call Render
   • Only if able to arrive within 4 hours AND
   • Cow is not suffering
2. Render will then perform euthanasia with a correctly placed bullet.
3. Carcass disposal by Render.

1. Inform owner that euthanasia needs to occur immediately
2. Owner or a designated employee will euthanize with correctly placed bullet
3. Check for absence of life
   • Absence of corneal reflex, lack of breathing, absence of heart sounds
4. Carcass disposal (dependent on local regulations)
CANDIDATES FOR EUTHANASIA

- Fractured limbs or spine
- No future quality of life due to chronic disease or health event
- Cancer
- Pain that can NOT be managed
- Health event resulting in unsuitable state for transport
- Likely to be condemned (suspected peritonitis)
TRAINING TO EUTHANASIA PROCEDURE

• Owners/employees should be trained to the euthanasia procedure by veterinarian
• Correct placement of the bullet
• Methods to check for the absence of life
  • absence of corneal reflex
  • no breathing
  • no heart sounds
EUTHANASIA

• Communicate

• Training

• Recognize the animals that are ready for a quality end to their life early

• Protocols for:
  • Decision
  • Act of euthanasia

• Best management practices ➔ minimize the need for euthanasia
Thank you!

http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/