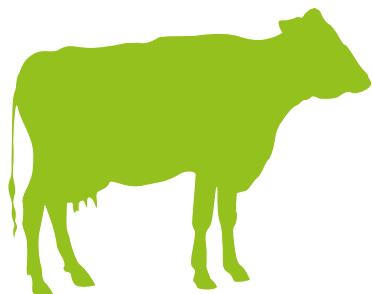


Preventing downer cows while transporting to slaughter



Everyone across the supply chain – farmers, veterinarians, transporters, saleyard operators and processors – has a role to play in protecting the welfare of animals. Find out what you need to know.

All cows transported to slaughter should have a comfortable and safe journey, arriving in a fit and healthy state. It's the responsibility of farmers to make sure cows are adequately prepared for transport, able to withstand the stress of travel, and are handled in a manner that minimises stress and injury. Lactating cows, including those in late lactation, have an increased risk of going down if not adequately prepared and managed.

Key Messages for Farmers

- Research has shown that travel times can impact on the welfare of cows. It is imperative that good communication is in place to ensure that the cows are well prepared for the length of the journey.
- Cows should be properly dried off before transport to slaughter. It is acknowledged that circumstances may prevent this at times, however, every effort should be made to dry off cows prior to transport for slaughter. Lactating cows should be milked as soon as possible prior to transport.
- Lactating cows, including those in late lactation, have an increased risk of going down when transporting to slaughter.
- Cows should be stood off green feed for at least 4 hours, but for no more than 12 hours, before pick-up. Lactating cows should not be held off green feed for more than 6 hours. During stand-off cows must be provided hay/baleage and have access to fresh water.
- Supplementation with calcium and magnesium should occur on the day of transport via a drench, or on dry feed.
- Check the destination and expected journey duration with transporters/processors. If the proposed travel schedule causes welfare concerns, the owner has the legal right to refuse the transport and request a new travel schedule.



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Key Messages for Transporters

- Plan transport as early as possible and confirm date and time with processors and farmers.
- Only accept cows that are fit for transport. Drivers have the right, and must, refuse to load unfit cows. Those assessed as unfit must not be transported without a veterinary certificate.
- Drivers should make regular stops during the journey to check the condition and welfare of their load. The first check should take place within 30 minutes of departure and subsequently at least two hourly throughout the duration of the journey.
- Lactating cows must not be without water for more than 12 hours, or without feed for more than 24 hours. These times are measured from when animals last received water and feed on farm.
- In compliance with the Transport Code of Welfare, vehicles carrying animals must be operated in a manner that does not cause animals to fall or be injured during travel.
- Vehicle covers must be used in appropriate circumstances to protect cows from adverse weather conditions while allowing adequate ventilation.

Key Messages for Processors

- Good planning is key to preventing downer cows. Ideally transport plans should be confirmed a week in advance.
- At the time of procurement, discuss and confirm the plans in place to ensure animals are fit for transport.
- Research has shown that travel times can impact on the welfare of cows. It is imperative that good communication is in place to ensure the cows are well prepared for the length of the journey. Travel time should be as short as practically possible for lactating cows.
- Lactating cows must be milked at least once every 24 hours.
- Processors must assess animals on arrival, and prioritise processing based on animal welfare risk, including for lactating cows, to minimise holding times in the yard.

Disclaimer

This information is intended to provide general guidance information only. It is not intended to take the place of, or to represent the written law of, New Zealand or other official guidelines or requirements. You are responsible for ensuring that you are aware of all of your animal welfare obligations.

The following links will help you understand your full responsibilities under New Zealand animal welfare law:

- <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/> for Animal Welfare Act 1999 and animal welfare regulations; and
- <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/> for codes of welfare.

While every effort has been made to ensure that this information is accurate, the Ministry for Primary Industries does not accept any responsibility or liability for error of fact, omission, interpretation or opinion that may be present, nor for the consequences of any decision based on this information.

Keep informed

If you have any questions contact MPI on **0800 00 83 33** or email animalwelfare@mpi.govt.nz.

You can **subscribe to MPI** to receive information about new animal welfare regulations as they're announced by visiting our website: www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/subscribe-to-mpi/