



## **Best Practices for Calf Transport and Slaughter**

Adopted by the VVMA Executive Board

May 6, 2010

1. All newborn calves, regardless of sex, should receive appropriate amounts (generally, at least 3 quarts) of high quality colostrum or a colostrum replacer containing at least 150g IgG, as soon as possible after birth, but at least within 8 hours.
2. After the initial feeding of colostrum, all calves under 30 days of age must be offered colostrum, whole milk, or milk replacer that is mixed to label specifications, at a minimum rate of 1 liter per calf per 12 hours with at least 8 hours between feedings. This should occur whether on the farm, in transport, at the sale barn or at the slaughter plant.
3. Shipping calves directly to a slaughter facility, if available, is preferable to shipping calves to a sale barn or other holding facility before the calves are taken to slaughter. Calves should be shipped to the nearest available slaughter facility.
4. During all parts of transport calves should have enough space to achieve sternal recumbency without being stepped on and be provided adequate bedding to keep them warm and dry. Transport vehicles must provide solid sides with adequate air exchange and protection from the weather.
5. Water must be available at all times when calves are not in transit.
6. If travel time is longer than 12 hours, the calves will be rested and fed at a holding facility for at least 2 hours before resuming their journey. Transport staff must be trained to move calves humanely.
7. The use of electric prods or excessive force of any kind – including, but not limited to, kicking, striking, throwing or dragging -- is strictly prohibited during any part of calf transport or slaughter.
8. Calves should not be moved without adequate staff assistance at slaughter or holding facilities; i.e. every 15 calves should have no less than 1 staff worker to help guide them at the time of movement. Loads of calves should be broken up into smaller groups to facilitate movement if workers are limited. Staff at these facilities must be trained to move calves humanely.

9. All facilities must have available, and use, sleds to move down calves without dragging them directly on the ground. If a sled is not available, down animals must be carried.
10. Any down calf that will not stand after a humane attempt has been made assist (people lifting front and hind end and rubbing vigorously) must be euthanized immediately and must not enter the food chain.
11. Concussion (stun) devices must be used correctly. Staff at slaughter facilities must be trained in proper placement of the concussion device and in the necessity to observe that the pupil of the eye becomes fixed and dilated after a successful use of the device. Diagrams to this effect must be posted at multiple locations in the slaughter plant.
12. Facilities must have sufficient staff involved in stunning animals such that after an animal is stunned it is be hung and bled out within 45 seconds.

**Notes:**

While it may not be possible, for economic reasons, to transport calves only after the age of 10 days, it is possible to make the existing transport of young calves more humane.

Many bull calves are weak and have scours due to failure of passive transfer. Ensuring adequate colostrum intake should reduce the incidence of scours and dehydration.

Calves may also be weak because they are hypothermic, tired or hungry. These can be addressed by proper transport and handling. Transport, sale barn and slaughter workers will be expected to know and follow the guidelines. Schedules for feeding responsibilities need to be arranged among the parties involved and are subject to inspection.

Calves do not herd well and do not respond well to being hit with prods or paddles. Leading calves by encouraging them to suck on the gloved fingers of a worker or the nipple of a bottle works well for individuals who will not move. Using fence or gate panels to guide groups of animals is more humane than striking the hind animals. Leading the lead animals with rubber nipples is a good way to start a group of unruly animals. Calves can also be picked up and carried.

Providing training, posting these guidelines, and ensuring that these guidelines are followed by all who handle young calves is a major goal of this effort.