

TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL HEALTH STANDARDS COMMISSION

SEPTEMBER 2012 REPORT

CHAPTER 7.9.

**ANIMAL WELFARE
AND BEEF CATTLE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS**

Article 7.9.1.

Definitions

Beef cattle production systems are defined as all commercial cattle production systems where the purpose of the operation includes some or all of the breeding, rearing and finishing of cattle intended for beef consumption.

Article 7.9.2.

Scope

This chapter addresses the welfare aspects of beef cattle production systems, from birth through to finishing. This scope does not include veal production.

Article 7.9.3.

Commercial beef cattle production systems

Commercial beef cattle production systems include:

1. Intensive

These are systems where cattle are in confinement and are fully dependent on humans to provide for basic animal needs such as food, shelter and water on a daily basis.

2. Extensive

These are systems where cattle have the freedom to roam outdoors, and where the cattle have some autonomy over diet selection (through grazing), water consumption and access to shelter.

3. Semi Intensive

These are systems where cattle are exposed to any combination of both intensive and extensive husbandry methods, either simultaneously, or varied according to changes in climatic conditions or physiological state of the cattle.

Article 7.9.4.

Criteria or measurables for the welfare of beef cattle

The following outcome-based measurables, specifically animal-based measurables, can be useful indicators of *animal welfare*. The use of these indicators and the appropriate thresholds should be adapted to the different situations where beef cattle are managed. Consideration should also be given to the design of the system.

1. Behaviour

Certain behaviours could indicate an *animal welfare* problem. These include decreased feed intake, increased respiratory rate or panting (assessed by panting score), and the demonstration of stereotypic, aggressive, depressive or other abnormal behaviours.

2. Morbidity rates

Morbidity rates, including *disease*, lameness, post-procedural complication and injury rates, above recognised thresholds may be direct or indirect indicators of the *animal welfare* status of the whole *herd*. Understanding the aetiology of the *disease* or syndrome is important for detecting potential *animal welfare* problems. Scoring systems, such as lameness scoring, can provide additional information.

Post-mortem examination is useful to establish causes of *death* in cattle. Both clinical and post-mortem pathology could be utilised as an indicator of *disease*, injuries and other problems that may compromise *animal welfare*.

3. Mortality rates

Mortality rates, like morbidity rates, may be direct or indirect indicators of the *animal welfare* status. Depending on the production system, estimates of mortality rates can be obtained by analysing causes of *death* and the rate and temporo-spatial pattern of mortality. Mortality rates should ~~can~~ be recorded regularly, i.e. reported daily, monthly, annually or with reference to key husbandry activities within the production cycle.

4. Changes in weight and body condition

In growing animals, weight gain may be an indicator of animal health and *animal welfare*. Poor body condition score and significant weight loss may be an indicator of compromised welfare.

5. Reproductive efficiency

Reproductive efficiency can be an indicator of animal health and *animal welfare* status. Poor reproductive performance can indicate *animal welfare* problems. Examples may include:

- anoestrus or extended post-partum interval,
- low conception rates,
- high abortion rates,
- high rates of dystocia.

6. Physical appearance

Physical appearance may be an indicator of animal health and *animal welfare*, as well as the conditions of management. Attributes of physical appearance that may indicate compromised welfare include:

- presence of ectoparasites,
- abnormal coat colour or texture or excessive soiling with faeces, mud or dirt,
- dehydration,
- emaciation.

7. Handling responses

Improper handling can result in fear and distress in cattle. Indicators could include:

- chute or race exit speed,
- chute or race behaviour score,
- percentage of animals slipping or falling,
- percentage of animals moved with an electric goad,
- percentage of animals striking fences or gates,
- percentage of animals injured during handling, such as broken horns, broken legs, and lacerations,
- percentage of animals vocalizing during restraint.

8. Complications due to routine procedure management

Surgical and non-surgical procedures are commonly performed in beef cattle for improving animal performance, facilitating management, and improving human safety and *animal welfare*. However, if these procedures are not performed properly, *animal welfare* can be compromised. Indicators of such problems could include:

- post procedure *infection* and swelling,
- myiasis,
- mortality.

Article 7.9.5.

Recommendations

Each recommendation includes a list of relevant outcome-based measurables derived from Article 7.9.4. This does not exclude other measures being used where appropriate.

1. Biosecurity and animal health

a) Biosecurity and disease prevention

Biosecurity means a set of measures designed to maintain a *herd* at a particular health status and to prevent the entry or spread of infectious agents.

Biosecurity plans should be designed and implemented, commensurate with the desired *herd* health status and current *disease* risk and, for OIE *listed diseases*, in accordance with relevant recommendations found in the *Terrestrial Code*.

These biosecurity plans should address the control of the major sources and pathways for spread of pathogens:

- i) cattle,
- ii) other *animals*,
- iii) people,
- iv) equipment,

- v) vehicles,
- vi) air,
- vii) water supply,
- viii) feed.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate, mortality rate, reproductive efficiency, changes in weight and body condition score.

b) Animal health management

Animal health management means a system designed to optimise the physical and behavioural health and welfare of the cattle *herd*. It includes the prevention, treatment and control of *diseases* and conditions affecting the *herd*, including the recording of illnesses, injuries, mortalities and medical treatments where appropriate.

There should be an effective programme for the prevention and treatment of *diseases* and conditions consistent with the programmes established by a qualified *veterinarian* as appropriate.

Those responsible for the care of cattle should be aware of the signs of ill-health or distress, such as reduced feed and water intake, changes in weight and body condition, changes in behaviour or abnormal physical appearance.

Cattle at higher risk of *disease* or distress will require more frequent inspection by *animal handlers*. If *animal handlers* are not able to correct the causes of ill-health or distress or if they suspect the presence of a listed reportable *disease* they should seek advice from those having training and experience, such as *veterinarians* or other qualified advisers.

Vaccinations and other treatments administered to cattle should be undertaken by people skilled in the procedures and on the basis of veterinary or other expert advice.

Animal handlers should have experience in recognising and dealing with non-ambulatory cattle. They should also have experience in managing chronically ill or injured cattle.

Non-ambulatory cattle should have access to water at all times and be provided with feed at least once daily. They should not be transported or moved unless absolutely necessary ~~except~~ for treatment or diagnosis. Such movements should be done carefully using methods avoiding excessive lifting.

When treatment is attempted, cattle that are unable to stand up unaided and refuse to eat or drink should be killed humanely according to Chapter 7.5. as soon as recovery is deemed unlikely.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate, mortality rate, reproductive efficiency, behaviour, physical appearance and changes in weight and body condition ~~score~~.

2. Environment

a) Thermal environment

Although cattle can adapt to a wide range of thermal environments particularly if appropriate breeds are used for the anticipated conditions, sudden fluctuations in weather can cause heat or cold stress.

i) Heat stress

The risk of heat stress for cattle is influenced by environmental factors including air temperature, relative humidity and wind speed, and animal factors including breed, age, body condition, metabolic rate and coat colour and density.

Animal handlers should be aware of the risk that heat stress poses to cattle. If conditions are expected to induce heat stress reach this threshold, routine daily activities that require moving cattle should cease. If the risk of heat stress reaches very high levels the *animal handlers* should institute an emergency action plan that could include provision of shade, free access to drinking water, and cooling by the use of sprinkled water that penetrates the hair coat.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, including panting score and respiratory rate, morbidity rate, mortality rate,

ii) Cold stress

Protection from extreme weather conditions should be provided when these conditions are likely to create a serious risk to the welfare of cattle, particularly in neonates and young cattle and others that are physiologically compromised. This could be provided by natural or man made shelter structures.

Animal handlers should also ensure that cattle have access to adequate feed and water during cold stress. During extreme cold weather conditions, *animal handlers* should institute an emergency action plan to provide cattle with shelter, appropriate feed and water.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rates, physical appearance, behaviour including abnormal postures, shivering and huddling.

b) Lighting

Confined cattle that do not have access to natural light should be provided with supplementary lighting which follow natural periodicity sufficient for their health and welfare, to facilitate natural behaviour patterns and to allow adequate inspection of the cattle.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, morbidity, physical appearance.

c) Air quality

Good air quality is an important factor for the health and welfare of cattle. It is affected by air constituents such as gases, dust and micro-organisms, and is strongly influenced by management, particularly in intensive systems. The air composition is influenced by the stocking density, the size of the cattle, flooring, bedding, waste management, building design and ventilation system.

Proper ventilation is important for effective heat dissipation in cattle and preventing the build up of NH₃ and effluent gases in the confinement unit. Poor air quality and ventilation are risk factors for respiratory discomfort and *diseases*. The ammonia level in enclosed housing should not exceed 25 ppm.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate, behaviour, mortality rate, changes in weight and body condition score.

d) Noise

Cattle are adaptable to different levels and types of noise. However, exposure of cattle to sudden or loud noises should be minimised where possible to prevent stress and fear reactions (e.g. stampede). Ventilation fans, feeding machinery or other indoor or outdoor equipment should be constructed, placed, operated and maintained in such a way that they cause the least possible amount of noise.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour.

e) Nutrition

The nutrient requirements of beef cattle have been well defined. Energy, protein, mineral and vitamin contents of the diet are major factors determining the growth, feed efficiency, reproductive efficiency, and body composition.

Cattle should be provided with access to an appropriate quantity and quality of balanced nutrition that meets their physiological needs. Where cattle are maintained in extensive conditions, short term exposure to climatic extremes may prevent access to nutrition that meets their daily physiological needs. In such circumstances the *animal handler* should ensure that the period of reduced nutrition is not prolonged and that mitigation strategies are implemented if welfare is at risk of being compromised.

Animal handlers should have adequate knowledge of appropriate body condition scores for their cattle and should not allow body condition to fall outside an acceptable range. If supplementary feed is not available, steps should be taken to avoid starvation, including *slaughter*, sale or relocation of the cattle, or humane *killing*.

Feedstuffs and feed ingredients should be of satisfactory quality to meet nutritional needs. Where appropriate, feed and feed ingredients should be tested for the presence of substances that would adversely impact on animal health.

Cattle in intensive production systems typically consume diets that contain a high proportion of grain(s) (corn, milo, barley, grain by-products) and a smaller proportion of roughages (hay, straw, silage, hulls, etc.). Diets with insufficient roughage can contribute to abnormal oral behaviour in finishing cattle, such as tongue rolling. As the proportion of grain increases in the diet, the relative risk of digestive upset in cattle increases. *Animal handlers* should understand the impact of cattle size and age, weather patterns, diet composition and sudden dietary changes in respect to digestive upsets and their negative consequences (acidosis, bloat, liver abscess, laminitis). Where appropriate beef producers should consult a cattle nutritionist for advice on ration formulation and feeding programmes.

Beef producers should become familiar with potential micronutrient deficiencies or excesses for intensive and extensive production systems in their respective geographical areas and use appropriately formulated supplements where necessary.

All cattle need an adequate supply and access to palatable water that meets their physiological requirements and is free from contaminants hazardous to cattle health.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rates, morbidity rates, behaviour, changes in weight and body condition score, reproductive efficiency.

f) Flooring, bedding, resting surfaces and outdoor areas

In all production systems cattle need a well-drained and comfortable place to rest. All cattle in a group should have sufficient space to lie down and rest at the same time.

Pen floor management in intensive production systems can have a significant impact on cattle welfare. Where there are areas that are not suitable for resting such as excessive water and faecal accumulation, these areas should not be of a depth that would compromise welfare and should not comprise the whole of usable area available to the cattle.

Slopes of pens should be maintained to allow water to drain away from feed troughs and not pool excessively in the pens.

Pens should be cleaned as conditions warrant and, at a minimum, after each production cycle.

If cattle are kept housed on a slatted floor ~~shed~~, the slat and gap widths should be appropriate to the hoof size of the cattle to prevent injuries. Wherever possible, cattle on slatted floors should have access to a bedded area.

In straw or other bedding systems, the bedding should be maintained to provide cattle with a dry and comfortable place in which to lie.

Surfaces of concrete alleys should be grooved or appropriately textured to provide adequate footing for cattle.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rates (e.g. lameness, pressure sores), behaviour, changes in weight and body condition score, and physical appearance.

g) Social environment

Management of cattle should take into account the social environment as it relates to *animal welfare*, particularly in intensive systems. Problem areas include: agonistic and mounting activity, mixing of heifers and steers, feeding cattle of different size and age in the same pens, high stocking density, insufficient space at the feeder, insufficient water access and mixing of bulls.

Management of cattle in all systems should take into account the social interactions of cattle within groups. The *animal handler* should understand the dominance hierarchies that develop within different groups and focus on high risk animals, such as very young, very old, small or large size for cohort group, for evidence of bullying and excessive mounting behaviour. The *animal handler* should understand the risks of increased agonistic interactions between animals, particularly after mixing groups. Cattle that are suffering from excessive agonistic activity or mounting behaviour should be removed from the group.

Horned and non-horned cattle should not be mixed because of the risk of injury.

Adequate fencing should be provided to minimise any *animal welfare* problems that may be caused by mixing of inappropriate groups of cattle.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, physical appearance, changes in weight and body condition score, morbidity and mortality rate.

h) Stocking density

High stocking densities may increase ~~the injury rate injuries~~ and have an adverse effect on growth rate, feed efficiency and behaviour, such as locomotion, resting, feeding and drinking.

Stocking density should be managed such that crowding does not adversely affect normal behaviour of cattle. This includes the ability to lie down freely without the risk of injuries, move freely around the pen and access feed and water. Stocking density should also be managed such that weight gain and duration of time spent lying is not adversely affected by crowding. If abnormal behaviour is seen, measures should be taken such as reducing stocking density.

In extensive systems, stocking density should be matched to the available feed supply.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, morbidity rate, mortality rate, changes in weight and body condition score, physical appearance.

i) Protection from predators

Cattle should be protected as much as possible from predators.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rate, morbidity rate (injury rate), behaviour, physical appearance.

3. Management

a) Genetic selection

Welfare and health considerations, in addition to productivity, should be taken into account when choosing a breed or subspecies for a particular location or production system. Examples of these include nutritional maintenance requirement, ectoparasite resistance and heat tolerance.

Individual animals within a breed can be genetically selected to propagate offspring that exhibit traits beneficial to animal health and welfare. These include maternal instincts, ease of calving, birth weight, milking ability, body conformation and temperament.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate, mortality rate, behaviour, physical appearance, reproductive efficiency.

b) Reproductive management

Dystocia can be a welfare risk to beef cattle. Heifers should not be bred before they are physically mature enough to ensure the health and welfare of both dam and calf at birth. The sire has a highly heritable effect on final calf size and as such can have a significant impact on ease of calving. Sire selection should therefore account for the maturity and size of the female. Heifers and cows should not be implanted, inseminated or mated in such a way that the progeny results in increased risk to dam and calf welfare.

Pregnant cows and heifers should be managed during pregnancy so as not to become too fat or too thin. Excessive fatness increases the risk of dystocia, and both excessive condition gain and loss increase the risk of metabolic disorders during late pregnancy or after parturition.

Where possible, cows and heifers should be monitored when they are close to calving. Animals observed to be having difficulty in calving should be assisted by a competent handler as soon as possible after they are detected.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate (rate of dystocia), mortality rate (cow and calf), reproductive efficiency.

c) Colostrum

Receiving adequate immunity from colostrum generally depends on the volume and quality of colostrum ingested, and how soon after birth the calf receives it.

Where possible, *animal handlers* should ensure that calves receive sufficient colostrum within 24 hours of birth.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rate, morbidity rate, changes in weight.

d) Weaning

For the purposes of this chapter, weaning means the transfer of the calf from a milk-based diet to a fibrous diet. In beef cattle production systems, weaning can be a stressful time in the calf's life.

Calves should be weaned only when their ruminant digestive system has developed sufficiently to enable them to maintain growth and welfare.

There are different weaning strategies utilised in the beef cattle production systems. These include abrupt separation, fence-line separation and the use of devices placed in the nose of the calf to discourage suckling.

Special care should be taken if abrupt weaning is immediately followed by additional stressors such as transportation, as calves are at risk of increased morbidity under these circumstances.

If necessary, beef cattle producers should seek expert advice on the most appropriate time and method of weaning for their type of cattle and production system.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate, mortality rate, behaviour, physical appearance, changes in weight and body condition score.

e) Painful husbandry procedures

Husbandry practices that have the potential to cause pain are routinely practiced on cattle for reasons of production efficiency, animal health and welfare and human safety. These procedures should be performed in such a way as to minimise any pain and stress to the animal. ~~Performing~~ These procedures should be performed at as early an age as possible or using anaesthesia or analgesia under the recommendation or supervision of a *veterinarian* ~~should be considered~~.

Future options for enhancing *animal welfare* in relation to these procedures include: 1) ceasing the procedure and addressing the current need for the operation through management strategies; 2) breeding cattle that do not require the procedure; or 3) replacing the current procedure with a non-surgical alternative that has been shown to enhance *animal welfare*.

Example of such interventions include: castration, dehorning, ovariectomy (spaying), tail docking, identification.

i) Castration

Castration of beef cattle is performed in many production systems to reduce inter-animal aggression, improve human safety, avoid the risk of unwanted pregnancies in the *herd*, and enhance production efficiency.

Where it is necessary to castrate beef cattle, producers should seek guidance from *veterinarians* as to the optimum method and timing for their type of cattle and production system.

Methods of castration used in beef cattle include surgical removal of the testes, ischaemic methods, and crushing and disruption of the spermatic cord.

Where practical, cattle should be castrated before the age of three months, or at the first available handling opportunity beyond this age using the method available that causes least pain or suffering to the animal.

Producers should seek guidance from *veterinarians* on the availability and advisability of analgesia or anaesthesia for castration of beef cattle, particularly in older animals.

Operators performing castration of beef cattle should be trained and competent in the procedure used, and be able to recognise the signs of complications.

ii) Dehorning (including disbudding)

Beef cattle ~~that are naturally horned~~ are commonly dehorned in order to reduce animal injuries and hide damage, improve human safety, reduce damage to facilities and facilitate transport and handling. Where practical and appropriate for the production system, the selection of polled cattle is preferable to dehorning.

Where it is necessary to dehorn beef cattle, producers should seek guidance from veterinary advisers as to the optimum method and timing for their type of cattle and production system.

Where practical, cattle should be dehorned while horn development is still at the horn bud stage, or at the first available handling opportunity beyond this age. This is because the procedure involves less tissue trauma when horn development is still at the horn bud stage, and there is no attachment of horn to the skull of the animal.

Methods of dehorning (disbudding) at the horn bud stage include removal of the horn buds with a knife, thermal cautery of the horn buds, or the application of chemical paste to cauterise the horn buds. Methods of dehorning when horn development has commenced involve the removal of the horn by cutting or sawing through the base of the horn close to the skull.

Producers should seek guidance from *veterinarians* on the availability and advisability of analgesia or anaesthesia for dehorning of beef cattle, particularly in older animals, where horn development is more advanced.

Operators performing dehorning of beef cattle should be trained and competent in the procedure used, and be able to recognise the signs of complications.

iii) Ovariectomy (spaying)

Ovariectomy of heifers is sometimes required to prevent unwanted pregnancies under extensive rangeland conditions. Surgical spaying should be performed by *veterinarians* or by highly trained operators. Producers should seek guidance from *veterinarians* on the availability and advisability of analgesia or anaesthesia for spaying of beef cattle. The use of analgesia or anaesthesia should be encouraged.

iv) Tail docking

Tail docking has been performed in beef cattle to prevent tail tip necrosis in confinement operations. Research shows that increasing space per animal and proper bedding are effective in preventing tail tip necrosis. Therefore it is not recommended for producers to dock the tails of beef cattle.

v) Identification

Ear-tagging, ear-notching, tattooing, freeze branding and radio frequency identification devices (RFID) are preferred methods of permanently identifying beef cattle from an *animal welfare* standpoint. In some situations however hot iron branding may be required or be the only practical method of permanent identifying beef cattle. If cattle are branded, it should be accomplished quickly, expertly and with the proper equipment. Identification systems should be established also according to Chapter 4.1.

Outcome-based measurables: postprocedural complication rate, morbidity rate, behaviour, physical appearance, changes in weight and body condition score.

f) Handling and inspection

Beef cattle should be inspected at intervals appropriate to the production systems and the risks to the health and *welfare* of the cattle. In intensive farming systems, cattle should be inspected at least once a day.

Some animals may benefit from more frequent inspection for example: neonatal calves, cows in late gestation, newly weaned calves, and cattle experiencing environmental stress and those that have undergone painful husbandry or veterinary surgical procedures.

Animal handlers need to be competent in recognising the clinical signs of health, *disease* and *welfare* of beef cattle. There should be a sufficient number of *animal handlers* to adequately ensure the health and welfare of the cattle.

Beef cattle identified as sick or injured should be given appropriate treatment at the first available opportunity by competent and trained *animal handlers*. If *animal handlers* are unable to provide appropriate treatment, the services of a *veterinarian* should be sought.

If the animal's condition suggests the prognosis is poor with little chance of recovery, the animal should be humanely killed as soon as possible. For a description of methods for the humane *killing* of beef cattle see Article 7.6.5.

Recommendations on the handling of cattle are also found in Chapter 7.5.

Where beef cattle are herded into a handling facility from extensive conditions, they should be moved quietly and calmly at the pace of the slowest animal. Weather conditions should be taken into account and cattle should not be herded in excessively hot or cold conditions. Cattle should not be driven to the point of distress. In situations where the gathering and handling of the cattle is likely to be stressful, consideration should be given to the avoidance of multiple handling events by combining necessary management procedures within the one handling event. Where handling itself is not stressful, management procedures should be staged over time to avoid additive stress of multiple procedures.

Properly trained dogs can be effective aids for cattle herding. Cattle are adaptable to different visual environments. However, exposure of cattle to sudden or persistent movement or visual contrasts should be minimised where possible to prevent stress and fear reactions.

Electroimmobilisation should not be used.

Outcome-based measurables: handling response, morbidity rate, mortality rate, behaviour, reproductive efficiency, changes in weight and body condition score.

g) Personnel training

All people responsible for beef cattle should be competent according to their responsibilities and should understand cattle husbandry, behaviour, biosecurity, general signs of *disease*, and indicators of poor *animal welfare* such as stress, pain and discomfort, and their alleviation.

Competence may be gained through formal training or practical experience.

Outcome-based measurables: handling response, morbidity rate, mortality rate, behaviour, reproductive efficiency, changes in weight and body condition score.

h) Emergency plans

Where the failure of power, water and feed supply systems could compromise *animal welfare*, beef producers should have contingency plans to cover the failure of these systems. These plans may include the provision of fail-safe alarms to detect malfunctions, back up generators, access to maintenance providers, ability to store water on farm, access to water cartage services, adequate on-farm storage of feed and alternative feed supply.

Plans should be in place to minimise and mitigate the effects of natural disasters or extreme climatic conditions, such as heat stress, drought, blizzard, fire and flooding. Humane *killing* procedures for sick or injured cattle should be part of the emergency action plan. In times of drought, animal management decisions should be made as early as possible and these should include a consideration of reducing cattle numbers. Emergency plans should also cover the management of the farm in the face of an emergency *disease outbreak*, consistent with national programmes and recommendations of *Veterinary Services* as appropriate.

i) Location, construction and equipment

Farms for beef cattle should be situated in an appropriate geographical location for the health, *welfare* and productivity of the cattle.

All facilities for beef cattle should be constructed, maintained and operated to minimise the risk to the *welfare* of the cattle.

Equipment for handling and restraining beef cattle should only be used in a way that minimises the risk of injury, pain or distress.

Cattle in intensive or extensive production systems should be offered adequate space for comfort and socialisation.

Cattle that are tethered should, as a minimum, be able to lie down, turn around and walk.

In intensive production systems the feeder should be sufficiently large so that cattle have adequate access to feed and they should be clean and free of spoiled, mouldy, sour, packed or unpalatable feed. Also cattle should have access to water at all times.

Floors in housing facilities should be properly drained, and barns and races and chutes should provide traction to prevent injuries to cattle.

Races, chutes and pens should be free from sharp edges and protrusions to prevent injury to cattle.

Alleys and gates should be designed and operated to avoid impeding cattle movement. Slippery surfaces should be avoided. Grooved concrete, metal grating (not sharp), rubber mats or deep sand can be used to minimise slipping and falling. Quiet handling is essential to minimise slipping. When gates and catches are operated, excessive noise should be minimised, because it may cause distress to the cattle.

Hydraulic, pneumatic and manual restraining equipment should be adjusted, as appropriate, to the size of cattle to be handled. Hydraulic and pneumatic operated restraining equipment should have pressure limiting devices to prevent injuries. Regular cleaning and maintenance of working parts is imperative to ensure the system functions properly and is safe for the cattle.

Mechanical and electrical devices used in housing facilities should be safe for cattle.

Dipping baths are sometimes used in beef cattle production for ectoparasite control. Where these are used, they should be designed and operated to minimise the risk of crowding to prevent injury and drowning.

The loading of the cattle at the farms should be conducted accordingly to Chapters 7.2., 7.3. and 7.4.

Outcome-based measurables: handling response, morbidity rate, mortality rate, behaviour, changes in weight and body condition score, physical appearance, lameness.

j) Humane killing

For sick and injured cattle a prompt diagnosis should be made to determine whether the animal should be humanely killed or receive additional care.

The decision to humanely kill an animal and the procedure itself should be undertaken by a competent person.

Reasons for humane *killing* may include:

- i) severe emaciation, weak cattle that are non-ambulatory or at risk of becoming downers;
- ii) non-ambulatory cattle that will not stand up, refuse to eat or drink, have not responded to therapy;
- iii) rapid deterioration of a medical condition for which therapies have been unsuccessful;
- iv) severe, debilitating pain;
- v) compound (open) fracture;
- vi) spinal injury;
- vii) central nervous system *disease*; and
- viii) multiple joint *infections* with chronic weight loss.

For a description of methods for the humane *killing* of beef cattle see Article 7.6.5.