

MANAGING DOWNED CATTLE**1. PURPOSE**

Downed cattle are cattle that are unable or unwilling to stand. Whether it's a calf, heifer or cow, a downed animal is an emergency situation that must be managed carefully to ensure the health and safety of the animal and minimize discomfort.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

- 2.1 Trained and qualified staff
- 2.2 Herd veterinarian

3. MATERIALS

- 3.1 Electric prod (only if necessary)
- 3.2 Thermometer
- 3.3 anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg)
- 3.4 Grit
- 3.5 Wood shavings

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 If an animal becomes sick or injured:
 - assess the health of the animal and the likelihood of recovery based on the following conditions:
 - rectal temperature (Normal temperature range = 38.0-39.3 °C)
 - respiration
 - traces of diarrhea
 - allergic reaction
 - injury
 - Food and water intake
 - Ear temperature (cows)
 - If the animal requires treatment, consult with a technician.
- 4.2 The electric prod should only be used on a cow or heifer in extreme situations and as a last resort to help motivate the animal to give her best effort to stand.
- 4.3 If the animal cannot be moved humanely, contact the herd vet. The animal may be required to be euthanized. Refer to SOP DC-390: Euthanasia: Cattle.
- 4.4 **DOWNED CALF IN PEN (Calf Barn):**
 - 4.4.1 Assess the health of the calf. Refer to section 5.1.
 - 4.4.2 Contact the veterinarian immediately if:
 - 4.4.2.1 the calf is lethargic.
 - 4.4.2.2 the reason for being down is not obvious.
 - 4.4.3 The treatment will depend on the diagnosis, and it will be determined by the veterinarian.
 - 4.4.4 If the calf is housed in a group, separate the animal if there is any risk of injury caused by the pen-mates.
 - 4.4.5 Ensure the animal is in a clean, dry, comfortable area. Add bedding around the heifer if needed.

- 4.4.6 If the calf is not lethargic, ensure it can easily access food.
 - 4.4.6.1 Offer milk/water in a pail or bottle.
 - 4.4.6.2 Offer electrolytes when needed, to prevent dehydration.

4.4.7 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

4.5 **DOWNED HEIFER IN PEN (Heifer Barn):**

- 4.5.1 Assess the health of the heifer. Refer to section 5.1.
- 4.5.2 Contact the veterinarian immediately if the heifer is lethargic.
- 4.5.3 With some assistance, try to get the heifer up and standing.
 - 4.5.3.1 Apply grit and bedding on the floor around the heifer to prevent slipping.
 - 4.5.3.2 One person can help lift the heifer by the tail setting while she attempts to stand. If she continues to slip and is unable to stand with assistance, then she may be injured or in pain.
 - 4.5.3.2.1 Administer an anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg) upon the technician's recommendation.
 - 4.5.3.2.2 Allow her to rest for at least 15 minutes before trying to get her up again. Provide her with a minimum of 15 minutes of rest before attempting to assist her to stand once more. You can make 3 to 5 attempts, ensuring to incorporate breaks between each attempt.
 - 4.5.3.2.3 Contact the veterinarian if there is no progress after providing the anti-inflammatory.
- 4.5.4 Offer water, hay, and/or heifer ration.
- 4.5.5 Separate the animal if there is any risk of injury caused by the pen-mates.
- 4.5.6 Ensure the animal is in a clean, dry, and comfortable area. Add bedding around the heifer if needed.
- 4.5.7 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

4.6 **DOWNED COW IN TIE STALL:**

- 4.6.1 Assess the health of the cow. Refer to section 5.1.
- 4.6.2 Cold ear temperature is indicative of milk fever:
 - 4.6.2.1 Notify the technician if the ears are cold as this is indicative of milk fever:
 - 4.6.2.2 Administer Calcium upon the technician's recommendation.
- 4.6.3 With some assistance, try to get the heifer up and standing.

One person can help lift the cow by the tail setting while she attempts to get up.
- 4.6.4 If the cow appears to lunge too far forward, attach a strap to the front of her stall to prevent her from entering the feed manger.
- 4.6.5 If after a second attempt, she fails to stand, take rectal temperature. If the temperature above 39.3 °C
 - 4.6.5.1 Notify technician.
 - 4.6.5.2 Administer anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg) per the technician's recommendation.
 - 4.6.5.3 Indicative of infection and may require antibiotics.
- 4.6.6 Perform a Keto Test.
 - 4.6.6.1 Refer to SOP #DC-406: Post Partum Care of Dairy Cattle.
 - 4.6.6.2 The frequency of oral Propylene glycol will depend on the Keto test results

4.6.6.3 Highly positive Keto Test requires the administration of an i.v bolus of Dextrose.

4.6.6.4 Repeat the Keto Test 12 hours after Dextrose treatment.

4.6.7 If no symptoms, the cow may be injured or in pain.

4.6.7.1 Notify the technician.

4.6.7.2 Administer an anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg) upon the technician's recommendation.

4.6.7.3 Allow her to rest for at least 15 minutes before trying to get her up again.

4.6.8 If there is no improvement after the administration of medications, contact the veterinarian.

4.6.9 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

4.7 DOWNED LACTATING COW IN TIE STALL

4.7.1 Assess the health of the cow. Refer to section 5.1.

4.7.2 Milk her lying down and into a pail. Refer to SOP [DC-609: Milking Pail Cows in Tie Stalls](#).

4.7.3 Offer water and feed frequently throughout the day.

4.7.4 It could take hours or even days for a cow to stand. Be patient.

4.7.5 Once the cow is up, wait until she is solid on her feed before walking her to a box stall. If she has been down for a few days, wait a minimum of 1 hour before moving her.

4.7.6 Sprinkle grit on the path leading to the box stall before moving the cow.

4.7.7 Continue to milk the cow into a pail in the box stall. Refer to SOP [DC-610: Milking Pail Cows in Box Stalls](#). Do not take the cow out to a tie stall for milking until she is steady on her feet and does not have difficulty getting up/lying down.

4.7.8 Monitor locomotion and check for injuries, swelling, and lesions that require topical treatments.

4.7.9 Return to tie stall (with a strap) if/when she is not exhibiting any difficulty or discomfort while walking or getting up.

4.7.10 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

4.8 DOWNED COW IN BOX STALL:

4.8.1 Assess the health of the cow. Refer to section 5.1.

4.8.2 Cold ear temperature is indicative of milk fever:

4.8.2.1 Notify the technician if the ears are cold as this is indicative of milk fever:

4.8.2.2 Administer Calcium upon the technician's recommendation.

4.8.3 Offer water and feed frequently throughout the day.

4.8.4 It could take hours or even days for a cow to stand. Be patient.

4.8.5 Milk cow in the box stall, in a pail while she's lying down. Refer to SOP [DC-610: Milking Pail Cows in Box Stalls](#)

4.8.6 Help the cow to stand by lifting her by the tail setting while she attempts to get up.

4.8.7 Roll the cow over frequently (every 2 hours) throughout the day to ensure she is not lying on the same side for extended periods.

4.8.8 Transfer the cow to a tie stall (with a strap) only When she is no longer exhibiting any difficulty or discomfort while walking or getting up.

4.8.9 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

*CAUTION

The hip clamp to lift the cow should only be used under the recommendation of the vet. It should never be used for extended periods of time because it can damage the hips.

4.9 DOWNED COW IN FEED MANGER:

If a cow ends up in the manger and is unable to get up on her own:

- 4.9.1 Assess the health of the cow. Refer to section 5.1.
- 4.9.2 Notify the technician.
- 4.9.3 Place rubber mats around her legs and sprinkle grit down to reduce slipping.
- 4.9.4 One person can help lift the cow by the tail setting while she attempts to get up.
- 4.9.5 If she continues to slip and is unable to stand with assistance, then she may be injured or in pain.
- 4.9.6 Notify the technician
- 4.9.7 Administer anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg) upon technician's recommendation.
- 4.9.8 Allow her to rest for at least 15 minutes before trying to get her up again.
- 4.9.9 If the cow has splayed legs:
 - 4.9.9.1 Tie a rope/halter to one leg and try to pull the leg to the proper position.
 - 4.9.9.2 Roll the cow over onto that same side.
 - 4.9.9.3 Pull her leg out from under her to attach the hobbles to each of her hind legs.
- 4.9.10 Offer water, TMR and hay.
- 4.9.11 Return the cow through a tie stall to avoid slipping in the feed manger stall.
- 4.9.12 Once cow is up, bring her to a box stall.
 - 4.9.12.1 Sprinkle grit on the path leading to the box stall.
 - 4.9.12.2 Milk the cow according to SOP [DC- Milking Pail Cows](#).
 - 4.9.12.3 Do not take the cow out to a tie stall for milking until she is steady on her feet and does not have difficulty getting up/lying down.
- 4.9.13 If the cow still does not get up
- 4.9.14 If after a second attempt she fails to stand, take rectal temperature. If the temperature above 39.5 °C
 - 4.9.14.1 Notify technician.
 - 4.9.14.2 Administer anti-inflammatory (e.g., Anafen 3mg/kg) per the technician's recommendation.
 - 4.9.14.3 Indicative of infection and may require antibiotics.
 - 4.9.14.4 Perform a Keto Test. Refer to SOP [DC-406: Post partum Care of Dairy Cattle](#).
 - 4.9.14.5 Frequency of oral glycol will depend on the Keto Test results.
 - 4.9.14.6 Roll the cow over frequently (every 2 hours) throughout the day to ensure she is not lying on the same side for extended periods.
 - 4.9.14.7 Contact the veterinarian if there is no improvement. The cow may need to be manually transported to the box stall.

4.9.14.8 With the assistance of several personnel, push the cow onto a “sleigh” and transfer to the box stall using a skid steer.

4.9.15 Monitor the locomotion and check for injuries that require topical treatments. Return the animals to tie stall (with a strap) if/when she is no longer exhibiting any difficulty or discomfort while walking or getting up.

4.9.16 Record all interventions in the log sheet.

Document Status and Revision History

DATE	NEW VERSION
8-Sept-2023	Version 01: Mac Campus FACC approved