



# CEDAR GROVE VETERINARY SERVICE NEWSLETTER



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## IS YOUR FARM PREPARED FOR AN ANIMAL WELFARE AUDIT?

Today's consumer is more interested than ever before in their food. They want to know how it is produced, who is producing it, and how these people treat their animals. The industry has taken notice of these changing consumer preferences. As a result, the cheese, butter, and fluid milk companies you ship milk to might be asking you about your animal welfare practices, if they haven't already. At first, this may seem overwhelming; but with a little bit of time and effort you may realize you are already animal welfare ready and didn't even know it.

This article hopes to provide farmers with the tools necessary to be prepared for an animal welfare audit. Most of the recommendations in this article are based off the FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) program. The FARM program is one of the most widely used animal welfare management programs. Most farmers likely meet a lot of the basic requirements to qualify as a

farm with good animal welfare practices. However, many don't have written documentation, which is important for both the farmer and the dairy processing plant.

The first important objective is to establish a VCPR (Veterinarian Client Patient Relationship) with a veterinarian. While you may have worked with the same vet clinic for 30+ years and everyone knows who the vet is on the farm, it is important to have documentation of this relationship. It establishes a veterinary presence on the farm for the purposes of management practices, antibiotic treatments, and animal husbandry practices.

The next step is to establish documentation of training for all non-immediate family members. This includes both new and existing employees. Areas to focus on for training (but not limited to) are cattle handling, calf care, euthanasia management, non-ambulatory cow management, milking

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR ANTIBIOTICS?

### Zactran

**Use:** Zactran is on label to treat:

- Bovine respiratory disease due to *M. haemolytica*, *P. multocida*, *H. somni*, and *M. bovis* in **Non-Lactating Dairy Animals and Beef Animals**

**Dose:** 2.0 mL per 110 lbs body weight SQ

**Dosing:** Inject subcutaneously as a single dose in the neck. Do not inject more than 10 mL per injection site

### **Special Notes:**

- 35-day meat withhold
- Do not use in female dairy cattle 20 months of age or older

procedures, and tractor safety. Training should be re-visited on an annual basis.

Working with a veterinarian, every farm should develop a written herd health plan. This herd health plan should include written protocols for identification and treatment of

diseases, animal husbandry, vaccine protocols, and milking procedures. While these can vary from farm to farm, certain protocols should be included due to their pertinence to good animal welfare management. These include protocols for:

- Handling and restraint of animals to minimize stress
- Dehorning/disbudding
- Calf castration
- Extra teat removal
- Pain mitigation in both calves and cows
- Non-ambulatory cow management
- Euthanasia methods
- Identification and treatment of common diseases
- Culling and transporting slaughter animals
- Parasite control
- Lameness management
- Dystocia management

It is also good to note in a herd health plan that tail docking is banned. If other alternatives are being used, proper protocols should be listed for their use.

Once protocols are established, each farm needs to have accurate ways to record and track animals on the farm. The most important record sheet to have is a drug log that lists cow ID, date and time of treatment, disease identified, drugs and doses given, withdrawal times, and employee/vet/manager that

administered the treatment. Other log sheets to establish and use are record of death and causes of death and a record of drug inventory on the farm.

Finally, the FARM program has many recommendations for the environment and housing of dairy cattle. All cattle, youngstock and adults, should have access to fresh, clean water always. Calves should receive adequate colostrum at birth and proper nutrition. Cows' rations should provide the required nutrition needed for growth, health, and lactation. Housing should allow all cattle to stand up, lie down, and rest without risk of injury. The resting area for all cattle should provide bedding that provides adequate cushion, dryness, and traction. Calves should have bedding that is deep and dry. Also as previously discussed, calves need a well-ventilated housing facility.

The way in which the FARM program intends to evaluate animal welfare is through Body Condition Scoring, Locomotion Scoring, Hock/Knee lesion Scores, and Hygiene Scores. Therefore, it would be prudent for dairy farmers to be familiar with these scoring systems to be able to review how their cattle are comparing to the standards needed for cows in

a good animal welfare environment.

Finally, all farms should have all protocols and written instructions available in the language needed for employees assigned to animal care responsibilities. Also, a list of the names and telephone numbers for emergency services (owner, veterinarian, milk handler, equipment dealer, power company, etc.) should be displayed in a prominent place in languages that employees can understand.

With a little bit of time and effort (along with some help from your veterinarian), your farm can be ready in no time for a welfare audit. Many of these requirements are practices that are most likely already happening on your farm. All you need to do is to take the extra steps to review what is still missing and to have it all written down.



