

Animal Care, Welfare & Transport

In Canada, fewer and fewer people live on farms, or even see farm animals. They are not sure about how dairy animals are treated and this sometimes makes people worry about the milk they're drinking. They also wonder if farm animals are being mistreated. You can help to educate people by taking good care of your 4-H dairy project animal and showing off this care at your local Achievement Program or local fair. You can also educate people you meet at agricultural venues about animal care.

The Basics of Animal Care

Caring for dairy animals is one of the most important parts of being a dairy farmer. There are **Five Freedoms** that farmers, 4-H members, animal owners and caretakers are all responsible for providing their animals. These freedoms are:

1. **Freedom** from thirst, hunger and malnutrition by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
2. **Freedom** from discomfort by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom** from pain, injury and disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom** to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom** from fear and distress by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.

Canada has a Code of Practice covering the care of dairy animals to ensure that they are treated properly. The Code outlines acceptable standards for:

- shelter and housing
- handling and supervision
- feed and water
- transportation
- healthcare
- sales yard and processing facilities
- breeding
- emergency procedures
- animal identification

Farmers are subject to laws about treatment of animals as outlined in the Criminal Code of Canada and the provincial Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Act. Those who break the rules by causing animals to suffer "unnecessary pain, injury, suffering or neglect" will be punished.

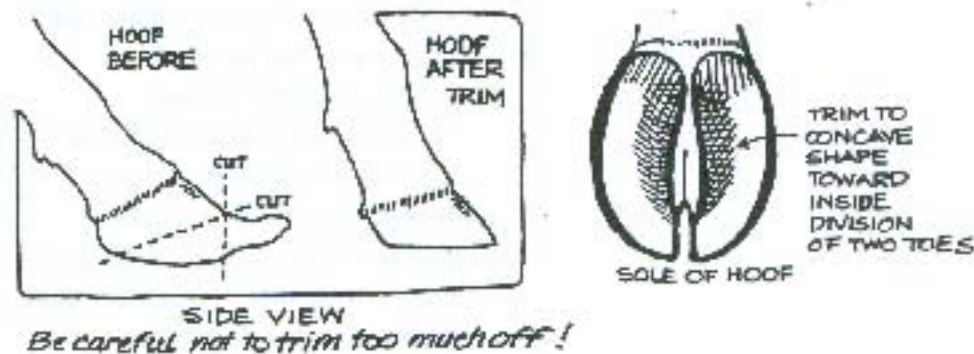
While aspects of animal care are covered throughout the various sections of the 4-H Dairy Reference Manual, here is an overview of the basic needs for animals:

- Housing – all housing must:
 - o Be dry and well-ventilated to give the animal enough fresh air
 - o Have sufficient space
 - o Be cleaned and disinfected before the animal moves in
 - o Have feeding systems that are suitable for presenting enough feed

- o Provide clean water
- o Be cleaned and re-bedded regularly
- Feeding – the feed given to an animal changes with her age, size and the stage she is at in her life cycle:
 - o Newborn calves should be fed colostrum
 - o Heifers should be transitioned from milk to milk and calf starter, then to forages
 - o Dry cows should be fed rations that will ensure a healthy transition into the milking herd
 - o Milking cows should be fed a balanced ration that supports milk production, reproduction and animal function
- Health – healthy animals have several common characteristics:
 - o 38.1°C to 39.5°C temperature
 - o 10-30 breaths per minute
 - o Aggressive, strong appetites
 - o Clear, bright eyes, shiny coats, and adequate body condition

In order to keep animals healthy, it is important to vaccinate against diseases and to treat your animals for any illness they might have.

A calf's feet are also important because when animals live in soft-well bedded pens their hooves grow too long and they can't stand properly. Regular hoof trimming helps to keep animals healthier and improves their locomotion.



Animal Welfare

Proper animal welfare is important for raising healthy dairy animals that will be productive over their lifetimes. It is also important because it helps to improve the public perception of dairy farming.

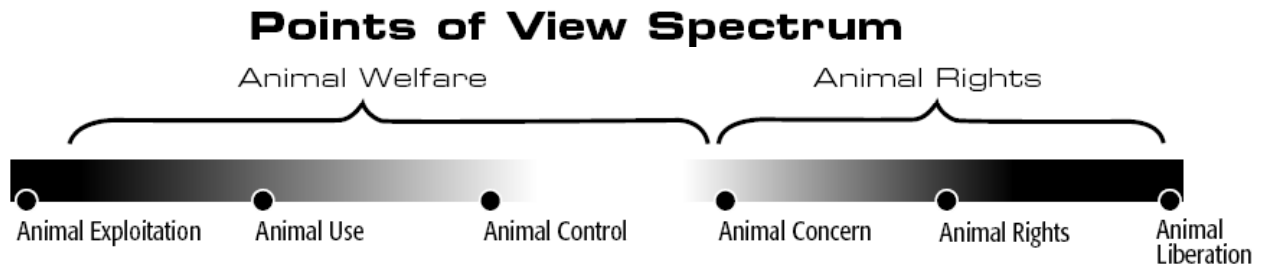
It's very important to understand the difference between animal welfare and animal rights when caring for your animals and when dealing with the public.

Animal Welfare – the belief that animals should be cared for properly. People can use animals for food and human benefit but must treat them well. Dairy farmers support animal welfare – their living depends on it!



Animal Rights – the belief that animals should not be used for human consumption, including food, clothing, medical research, pets or entertainment. Animal rights activists are not concerned with how well you treat your animals; they simply do not believe in raising farm animals for meat or milk at all.

Everyone has their own point of view on the spectrum of Animal Welfare vs. Animal Rights.



Source: *Learning About Animal Welfare, The Ontario Farm Animal Council*

It is important to understand that people have different opinions regarding the purpose of animals and how they should be cared for. As a dairy enthusiast, you may have to defend your position to someone who does not think that animals should be raised in captivity or used for milk or meat.

While you will not always change someone else's opinion, it is important to be able to show people that your animals are well taken care of.

You're an Ambassador for Agriculture!

How you act and what you say at a livestock event are important. People who see you treating your animal well will have a good impression of agriculture. If you can answer questions openly and honestly about your animal and how you care for it, you'll be a real agriculture ambassador!

Whenever you are at a public event, whether it's a 4-H achievement program or a local fair, you can expect to be asked some questions from the public. Remember that no question is a dumb question, especially from someone who does not have any farm experience. Public events are a great way to promote 4-H, animal care and agriculture.

Here are a few tips to help you talk to the public about agriculture:

- ✓ Be prepared – try to answer questions in a way that the asker will understand. Avoid slang or technical terms that someone from outside the industry will understand. Try comparing dairy cattle care with that of a pet that the person might have at home.
- ✓ Be ready for difficult situations – most visitors to a fair will be very interested in what 4-H is about and how you look after your animal. Some people might try to complain about animal treatment, ask difficult questions, or make a scene. Avoid getting into an argument with animal rights activists because it will not help your cause and will only be an upsetting experience.
- ✓ Know how to handle uncomfortable situations – no one has the right to make you feel uncomfortable. If someone asks something that makes you feel uncomfortable or that you do not know the answer to, tell them that you do not know and that you will follow up later (and then remember to follow up).
- ✓ Never argue – if you lose your temper, an animal rights activist has won. If an altercation made it onto the news, people who see it could have a negative view of you and of agriculture. Instead of arguing, you could just walk away or busy yourself with another task.



Effective Animal Displays

Animals naturally attract people to the exhibit area and promote discussion. These forums can help clarify misinformation and prevent future concerns, so it is important to provide an accurate portrayal of modern animal agriculture to the public.

- **Make it real:** Display farm animals in their regular housing. Do not foster or generate misconceptions by using inappropriate settings. The industry should be open about our practices and the rationale behind them. People see negative and/or inaccurate images of farming in the media all the time. This is agriculture's chance to show how things are really done, but do not forget to include an explanation why. Misconceptions are often fostered in fact, so farmers have to take every opportunity to explain the rationale behind modern practices to help bridge the gap between farm and fork.
- **All shapes and sizes:** People are more interested in different stages of growth of animals than breeds. Combine different breeds and sizes to maximize the value of the display. This is extremely important for explaining the lifecycle of a farm animal and how quickly they grow.
 - *Example:*
 - *A pen of Yorkshire weaners*
 - *A pen of Hampshire goats*
 - *A Landrace sow with a crossbred litter in a farrowing unit*
- **What is it?** Label everything, including age and breed. Do not assume that your audience will know a cow is a cow, and not a pony. Be as specific as you can without being confusing. Do not oversimplify by simply stating "COW" – Is it a dairy cow or a beef cow, a boy or girl, young or old? Explain the role of the animal: meat or milk; and what it eats, production methods, and equipment. If you include specific terms, be sure to define them.
- **Farm animals are not pets or people:** Avoid giving human-like characteristics to your animals. This is critical when trying to explain issues such as separating calves from cows and at what age they reach market weight. Use pedigree names if appropriate. If the animal on display does not have a name, do not give it one, instead explain it has a number and what the number represents. Replace signs which say "Hello, my name is Suzy and I eat hay." with "This young female cow is a beef breed called 'Charolais', due to have a calf in 2 months."



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Animal Handling

In addition to feeding, housing and otherwise providing for your animals, it is important to handle your dairy animals with care. It is important to understand animal behaviour in order to handle them properly.

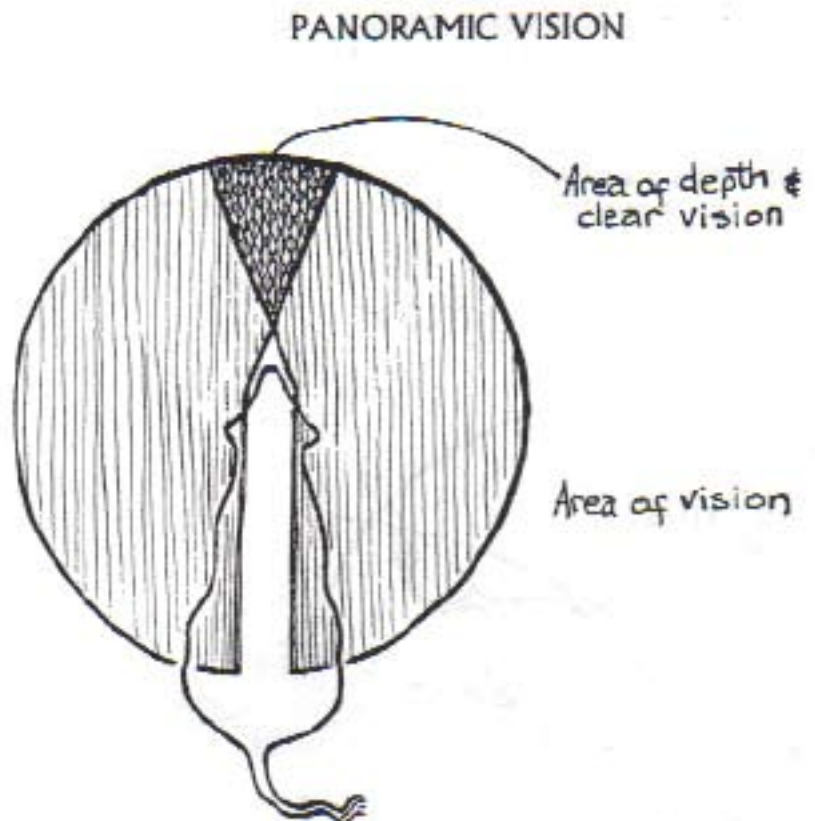
Animal Behaviour and the Environment

Animals react to their surroundings to make themselves feel more comfortable. The list below shows a few ways that animals respond to their physical environments:

- Older animals withstand colder temperatures because they have better internal control of their body temperatures and they have thicker, warmer hair coats than younger animals do
- Animals in cool environments will move towards sources of warmth
- Animals avoid overheating by moving away from warm areas. In hot weather, cattle spend more time alone and search out shady, cooler areas.
- Animals will seek shelter from wind and rain
- Cattle move best over a level surface. They don't like going uphill or downhill, especially if the footing is slippery. It is easier for them to move up an incline than to go down though.
- Cattle move away from disturbances in a circular fashion, allowing them to keep an eye on the disturbance.
- Cattle have herding instincts, wanting to follow other cattle. They will be quieter if they can be handled in groups rather than as individuals.

Cattle Vision

Cattle have very different eyesight than people do. Since their eyes are located on the sides of their heads, they have a large total area of vision called panoramic vision. However, they can only see very clearly in a small area in front of them where the vision. The only place that a cow cannot see at all is directly behind her. This type of vision causes animals to react very quickly to movement, noise or sudden changes in lighting.

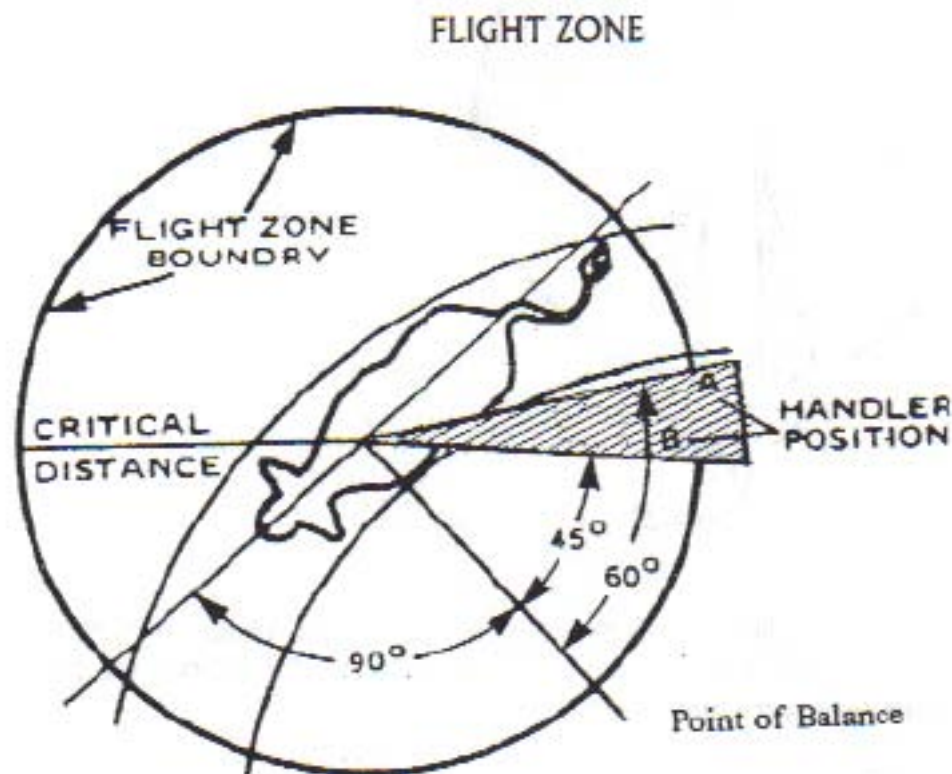


Flight Zone

The flight zone is the area around an animal that you cannot enter without making him or her move away from you. Entering the flight zone is kind of like someone invading your personal space.

Different cattle will have different flight zones based on how they have been handled and raised. Heifers who have been raised on pasture with little human contact will have a much larger flight zone than a show calf that is constantly handled and trained. As long as you stay on the edge of an animal's flight zone, it will move away from you in a circle at a steady pace. If you move into its flight zone or get too close to the animal, it will try to run away.

Whether cattle move ahead or backup within the flight zone depends on where the handler is in relation to the animal's point of balance. This point is usually around the animal's shoulder. If you approach an animal from in front of this point, it will back away from you. If you approach an animal from behind this point, it will move ahead and away from you.



Handle Animals Gently

When working with animals, handle them gently and with caution. Your quiet, softspoken behaviour will be far more successful in working with animals than yelling and hitting them. The more attention you give your animals during your daily routine, the quieter they will be and the easier they will be to handle.

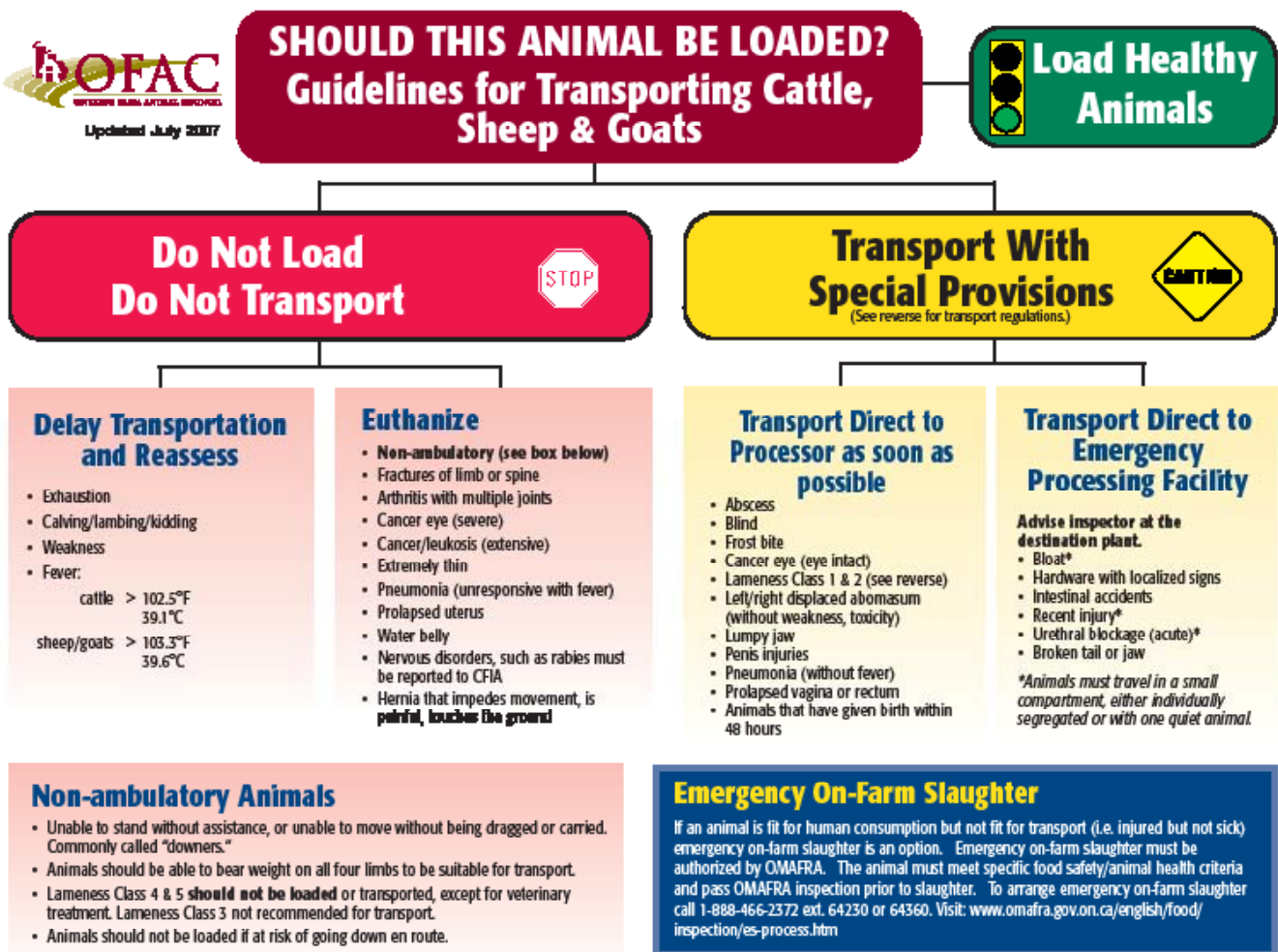
Remember, if there's one word that you should remember when working with animals, it's to treat them with RESPECT!



Transportation of Livestock

When loading and transporting cattle, it is important to keep their stress levels to a minimum by gentle handling, having a safe place to load animals and trucking them in a trailer that is clean, dry and has been disinfected between loads of animals.

There are times when animals should not be transported. Even though you might not want a very sick animal on your farm, it may not be suitable to transport. The chart below outlines guidelines for transporting livestock:



Source: Ontario Farm Animal Council, www.ofac.org. Accessed April 28, 2008.



References and Resources - Animal Care, Welfare & Transport

Ontario 4-H Beef Manual, 1999.

Ontario Farm Animal Council. "Learning About Animal Welfare" 4-H Resource, "Effective Animal Displays", "Guidelines for Transporting Cattle, Sheep and Goats". www.ofac.org.

