



Beef Cattle

SPCA Certified® Standards



SPCA Certified Standards for Beef Cattle

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SPCA Certified Standards for Beef Cattle

Overview of SPCA Certified

SPCA Certified is a certification system designed to celebrate good farming and raise animal welfare above current legal requirements. Its overarching goal is to improve the lives of as many animals as possible, through a process of increasing uptake and continual improvement over time. As such, SPCA Certified standards for beef cattle allow participants to demonstrate that they apply a high level of animal welfare to their farming operations.

Certification is given to participants, which may include farmers, distributors, retailers and companies, through a legal contract, following a successful initial assessment and subsequent welfare audit of compliance with the SPCA Certified standards.

SPCA Certified standards for beef cattle apply to beef cattle that are bred, grown and cared for outdoors on pasture, where they have a degree of autonomy over diet selection, water consumption and access to shade and shelter.

This includes beef cattle on breeding and finishing farms, whether operated as one, or separately, as well as farms:

- Breeding their own calves for replacement and finishing steers for slaughter.
- Buying calves in from other sources.
- Selling calves at weaning to finishing farms.
- Engaged in finishing only.

IMPORTANT: SPCA does not support the farming of beef cattle in feedlots, regardless of the size of the operation.

In terms of the welfare outcomes they achieve, SPCA Certified standards are intended to go beyond the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and relevant Codes of Welfare. They are informed by animal behaviour and welfare science, consultation with stakeholders, and the values of SPCA. All farm staff, operators and owners should be aware of, and compliant with the standards, as well as the legal requirements relating to the animals in their care.

SPCA Certified standards are to be used alongside existing industry programmes and practices on farm, and should be read in association with the following documents:

- Animal Welfare Act 1999.
- Animal Welfare (Sheep and Beef Cattle) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Transport within New Zealand) Code of Welfare 2018.
- Animal Welfare (Commercial Slaughter) Code of Welfare 2018.

Framework of the SPCA Certified Standards

Previous iterations of SPCA Standards (Blue Tick) were based on the 'Five Freedoms' framework, which focuses on freedom from negative states, e.g. hunger, fear and injury, in order to achieve good welfare. However, with the recognition that animals can experience positive, as well as negative emotions and the acknowledgement of sentience¹ in the amended Animal Welfare Act 1999, the time has come for a new approach.

As a result, the framework for the SPCA Certified standards has been derived from the Five Domains model of animal welfare, developed by New Zealand Professor David Mellor². The Five Domains model is a holistic assessment of animal welfare, which addresses both minimising suffering and promoting positive emotional states.

The Five Domains are:

- nutrition;
- physical environment;
- health;
- behavioural interactions; and
- mental state.

Each of the four physical domains contribute to the provision of opportunities for positive mental experiences, as evaluated in the fifth domain.



¹ Sentience is the ability to feel, perceive or experience things subjectively (i.e. from one's own perspective), rather than objectively (i.e. from an external perspective).

² Mellor, D. J., Beausoleil, N. J., Littlewood, K. E., McLean, A. N., McGreevy, P. D., Jones, B., & Wilkins, C. (2020). The 2020 five domains model: Including human-animal interactions in assessments of animal welfare. *Animals: an open access journal from MDPI* 10(10): 1870.

Scope

SPCA Certified standards for beef cattle apply from the moment that an animal arrives, or is born, on the farm, until the time that it leaves the farm or is euthanased.

All transport, including transport to and from the farm, and all slaughter processes, are covered by the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and relevant Codes of Welfare. It is the responsibility of the member (farmer/licensee³) to ensure that transport operators, contractors and slaughter facilities comply with the law and ideally follow all best practice recommendations.

Traceability and Integrity

SPCA Certified endeavours to inspire best practice animal welfare within the beef industry and to ensure transparency in animal welfare. To protect the integrity of SPCA Certified and the participating farmers, distributors, retailers and companies who use the brand, it is important that all SPCA Certified members clearly demonstrate product traceability throughout their supply chains.

SPCA Certified also uses independent audits, including unannounced audits, to maintain the integrity of the scheme and ensure that participants are meeting its standards. As a result, products carrying the SPCA Certified logo allow consumers to identify beef products that have come from cattle farmed to a higher standard of animal welfare than is currently required by law.

For more information about SPCA Certified, including types of membership, procedures and the independent auditing process, please refer to the SPCA Certified Farmed Animals Operations Manual.

³ See the SPCA Certified Farmed Animals Operation Manual for more information.

SPCA Certified Standards for Beef Cattle

Important notes:

- Section titles and their accompanying descriptions are taken from the Five Domains.
- Unless stated otherwise, all standards referring to adult cattle apply equally to calves.
- Information presented in ***bold italic*** type is either a standard explanation, a recommendation, an area of concern, or an indication of where a standard is likely to be reviewed in the future.
- In order to avoid unnecessary duplication, existing information/records from other sources can be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of a standard. Electronic records are acceptable, as long as they can be accessed by SPCA Certified during assessments/audits.

Note on working dogs

The requirements of the Code of Welfare for Dogs (2018) apply to working dogs and must be followed at all times. Farmers using dogs to manage stock must ensure that they are properly fed and watered, well exercised, kept in good overall condition and provided with suitable accommodation that is kept clean and habitable.

If working dogs are observed to be in poor condition or housing is deemed to be unacceptable, this will be noted during the assessment/audit and followed up by SPCA Certified. Failure to remedy the situation may lead to removal from the programme.

Positive Mental Experience



Provide safe, congenial and species-appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences

The cow icon  indicates those standards that provide positive mental experiences for beef cattle.

Good Nutrition



Provide ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour

Feed

- N1 Pasture must be capable of providing for the nutritional requirements of cattle at all stages of life and production. Where pasture is of low quality or quantity, additional forage or feed supplementation is required.
- N2 Management practices must be in place to ensure there is enough pasture/feed to allow regular, frequent, rotational grazing if the weather is very wet or the pasture becomes trampled and muddy.
- N3 Where additional feed is required; it should be provided in a manner that avoids unnecessary competition for access between animals.
- N4 Where feed is stored; practices must be in place to ensure that it does not become contaminated or unsuitable for cattle to eat.
- N5 A trace element supplementation programme, with appropriate monitoring, must be in place. Records must be available for inspection on request.
- N6 A written plan to adequately manage feed supply is required for periods when there may be limited feed, such as drought, extreme winter conditions or dry summers, and during different physiological stages of the life cycle, e.g. at calving.
- N7 Cow body condition must be managed between BCS 6 - 8 (on a scale of 1 – 10). Where the body condition score of any adult animal drops below 4, immediate corrective action must be taken.
- N8 All body condition scoring must be recorded and particular attention must be paid to condition scoring during weaning, mid-winter, pre-calving and mating.

It is recommended that the farm establishes a good working relationship with a specialist in cattle nutrition.

Augmenting the soil is the recommended method to address mineral deficiencies, when identified in cattle.

For a useful guide to body condition scoring beef cattle, visit:

<https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/beef-cow-body-condition-scoring>

Water

- N9 All cattle, including unweaned calves, must have uncompetitive access to a freely available supply of clean, fresh drinking water, at all times.
- N10 The number and size of troughs and drinkers, and their water flow rate, must be sufficient to allow all calves and cattle to access water during peak drinking times.
- N11 Troughs and drinkers must be provided at a height that allows calves and cattle to drink using a normal, comfortable drinking posture.
- N12 Where electric fences are used; they must be placed so as not to discourage cattle from easily accessing troughs or drinkers.
- N13 The area surrounding troughs and drinkers must be actively managed to ensure that it does not become flooded or excessively muddy.
- N14 Troughs and drinkers must be cleaned, as required, in order to maintain good quality, clean, palatable water.
- N15 Cattle must be fenced off or otherwise prevented from accessing surface water sources, e.g. streams, ponds and dams.
- N16 Water at the trough or drinker level must be tested at least every three years, in order to ensure that it is potable and has an acceptable mineral content. Water quality records must be kept, including the alternative measures used, if/when problems are discovered.
- For the avoidance of doubt, each separate water source servicing troughs and drinkers must be tested.
- N17 Each new water source must be tested before cattle are given access to it, in order to ensure that it is:
- a) potable; and
 - b) that mineral and microbial contamination levels are acceptable.
- N18 In the event of a major incident in the surrounding area, e.g. an earthquake or flood, the water supply must be tested within two months (if safe to do so), for potability and potential contamination.
- N19 An alternative source of potable water to the primary source must be available in the event of an emergency and identified on the emergency preparedness plan (see Standard E34).

Calving and weaning

Note: Standards N20 – N22 only apply to those calves which cannot be raised naturally by their dam.

- N20 Colostrum or colostrum substitute must be given as soon as possible after birth and ideally within the first four hours of life.

- N21 Colostrum, milk, or milk replacer, must be offered at a rate of 10 – 12 % of bodyweight per day during the first week after birth, divided into at least two feeds per day, while taking care to watch for signs of bloat/scours. Colostrum should be given warm, not cold, in order to increase palatability and intake.
- N22 After the first week of life, calves must be offered milk or milk replacer at least two times each day.
- N23 Calves must not be weaned before six months of age, unless a veterinarian advises that it would be detrimental to the health or welfare of the calf and/or their dam. If early weaning occurs, the reason for it must be recorded in the animal health plan.
- N24 Calves must be weaned into an area where they have access to both shade and shelter, and appropriate feed and water, according to these standards.

It is strongly recommended that calves are kept with their mothers until natural weaning occurs.

Where early weaning is done, progressive methods, e.g. gradual separation or two-stage weaning, are recommended, in order to minimise distress to the calf/dam and improve overall animal health and performance.

Good Physical Environment



Provide shade/shelter and suitable housing, good air quality and comfortable resting areas

Site plans

- E1 A detailed site plan must be kept on farm, showing:
- the layout of all buildings and pasture areas;
 - all natural and/or artificial shelter and shade provisions;
 - access roads and laneways; and
 - waste disposal areas.

The site plan must also include the dimensions and names/numbers of all areas where cattle are kept and handled.

Fencing

- E2 All fencing must be designed, constructed, and actively maintained, to minimise the risk of injury to animals and to ensure that they are securely contained.

Netted fencing must not be used to contain horned cattle.

- E3 The use of electrified barbed wire fencing is prohibited.
- E4 Where electric fences are in operation; an electric fence tester must be used to measure voltage levels running through the fence line. Any faults detected must be promptly rectified.
- E5 All fencing and gates used to contain cattle must be inspected each time cattle enter and leave an area, in order to ensure that it complies with standard E2 above and is not harmful to the animal's welfare.

Future versions of this standard will not permit the use of barbed wire fences. It is recommended that non-barbed alternatives are chosen whenever existing fences are due to be replaced.

Shade and shelter

- E6 All cattle must have access to shade and shelter at all times, in order to let them manage their temperature and avoid the impact of extreme weather (both hot and cold).
- E7 Cattle showing signs of heat or cold stress, e.g. panting or shivering, especially young, sick, heavily pregnant or calving individuals, must be attended to immediately.
- E8 Cattle must be checked every day during extreme weather (both hot and cold), to ensure that the shade and shelter provided is appropriate. If it is not, remedial action must be taken.

Activities such as prolonged yarding must also be avoided during these periods.

- E9 Cattle close to calving or those with newborn calves must be provided with an environment that affords both the dam and newborn calf protection from variable climactic conditions.

Free access to shade and shelter is important for animals to manage their temperature and overall wellbeing. It can also provide health, productivity and comfort benefits. 🐄

For most grazing livestock in New Zealand, when the air temperature rises above 25°C, welfare and productivity begins to decline as animals use energy to stay cool.

During winter, it is recommended that a small number of cattle are scored for cleanliness on a regular basis, in order to ensure that their lying areas are comfortable and dry. If dirty animals are seen, the reasons for this need to be investigated and remedied.

Shade and shelter can include natural and artificial structures, including windbreaks, treed areas, shade sails, lean-to structures and shelterbelts.

Housing

- E10 If cattle are housed for any reason; this must be documented. Details must include:
- the date of being housed;
 - the duration of housing;
 - the number of animals being housed;

- the date of access/return to the paddock (or movement off-farm/euthanased); and
- the reason for housing.

SPCA Certified does not support the housing of beef cattle, however, there may be exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to do so for short periods of time, e.g. when dealing with pre-weaned calves without their dams, injured animals or during severe weather, where conditions are beyond the animal's normal ability to cope.

Transport

E11 Before loading, cattle must be assessed, in order to ensure that they are fit for transport and able to withstand the entire journey without suffering pain or distress. The assessment must take into consideration:

- the condition of the animal;
- its body condition;
- its age;
- the duration of the trip; and
- the likely weather/temperature conditions.

If there is any question about whether an animal is fit for transport or not, a veterinarian must be consulted.

E12 All cattle must be free from signs of injury or disease, including pink eye. Any wounds or skin lesions identified must be fully healed and free from discharge.

No animal must be transported if it:

- has ingrown horn(s);
- is unable to bear weight on all four legs;
- is suffering from poor body condition (BCS 3 or less);
- is likely to give birth within 72 hours of transport or shortly after;
- has given birth in the last 72 hours;
- has cancer eye lesions greater than 2 cm, extending beyond the eye or eyelid and/or are bleeding or discharging;
- has an injured or diseased udder (unless accompanied by a valid veterinary certificate);
- shows signs of respiratory distress; or is, for any other reason;
- unfit for transport.

Cattle that are unfit for transport must be given immediate veterinary care or else euthanased without delay.

Where animals have undergone a painful husbandry procedure, e.g. castration, they must not be transported for at least three weeks after the procedure.

E13 Holding and loading facilities must be designed to facilitate ease of movement and reduce handling stress for cattle and stockpeople.

E14 Cattle must not be stood-off on concrete.

- E15 On arrival into the yards, cattle must be allowed enough time (approximately 20 minutes) to settle, before further drafting or moving.
- E16 Cattle must be kept off green feed for a minimum of four and maximum of twelve hours before transport.
- During this period, access to good quality roughage should be given.
- E17 Cattle must be provided with free access to clean water until immediately before loading. Water must be given in a way that avoids unnecessary competition between animals.
- E18 Holding yards must provide enough shade and shelter to cover all animals contained. Where signs of thermal stress (hot or cold) are evident, during either lairage or transport, immediate remedial action must be taken.
- There must be enough space to allow all animals to be able to stand up, lie down and remain in their original social groups.
- E19 Unfamiliar animals must not be mixed.
- E20 Horned cattle must be transported in a way that minimises the risk of injury to other animals and stockpeople. This may include separate loading and individual containment during transport.
- E21 Stationary periods during loading, transport or before unloading must be minimised, as heat and humidity build-up during this time is a major contributor to heat stress in cattle.
- E22 Areas of high use, e.g. ramps and head bails, must have surfaces that are non-slip, easily cleaned and regularly maintained.
- E23 Bumpers or buffer pads must be provided between the loading ramp and transport vehicle to prevent bruising and injuries to cattle.
- E24 Where adjustable or portable ramps are used, they must be able to firmly attach to the transport vehicle, to prevent ramp movement during loading and unloading.
- E25 All transport vehicles and equipment must be appropriately designed and have non-slip surfaces.
- E26 The angle of the ramp must not exceed 20 degrees for adult cattle and 12 degrees for calves.
- E27 Cattle must be allowed to load at their regular walking speed, without unnecessary force or noise.
- E28 Transport of cattle must not exceed eight hours, starting from when the first animal is loaded into the transport vehicle and ending when the last animal is unloaded.
- E29 Transport must be avoided during conditions where severe thermal stress (hot or cold) could occur. Where transport during these periods cannot be avoided, stocking densities on the vehicle must be adjusted to mitigate the risk.
- E30 Where possible, the closest slaughterhouse must be used, so that animals are transported

for the least amount of time. Where the closest slaughterhouse is not used, a reason for this must be recorded as part of the transport records.

- E31 The timing of moving cattle into the yards for transport to slaughter must be planned between the farmer, transporter and slaughterhouse, in order to minimise waiting times.
- E32 Transport records must be kept on farm and must include:
- the name and address of all transit destinations (including slaughterhouses);
 - the name of the transport company used for each journey;
 - the number of, and approximate age of, the cattle being transported for each journey;
 - the time the cattle last had access to water and green feed;
 - the time the cattle arrived into the yards and when they were loaded onto the vehicle;
 - a signed declaration stating that the animals were fit for transport;
 - the number of animals found unfit for transport and the reasons why; and
 - the time the vehicle left the farm.
- E33 Transport operators must have contingency plans in place, in order to ensure the welfare of the cattle in their care, in the case of an emergency, e.g. vehicle delay, mechanical breakdown, major accident/weather event.

Transport is a highly stressful experience for most animals, including cattle. Careful planning is therefore required before transport, in order to minimise the risk of distress and injury.

It is recommended that all stockpersons involved in the cattle transportation process have formal training in animal handling.

Emergency preparedness

- E34 An emergency preparedness (contingency) plan must be created and all staff must be familiar with it.

The plan must detail how the health and welfare of the cattle will be ensured in an emergency, e.g. drought, flood, fire, storm and biosecurity breach, and what everyone's roles and responsibilities are.

The emergency preparedness plan must be reviewed annually and updated where major changes in management practices have occurred or where a new emergency has been encountered and resolved.

All emergencies and corrective actions taken must be recorded.

Good Health



Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease and injury, and foster good muscle tone, posture and cardiorespiratory function, for a healthy animal

Animal health plan

- H1 An animal health plan must be created and maintained in conjunction with a registered veterinarian. The plan must include:
- a preventative disease and parasite management plan, e.g. vaccinations and drench programmes;
 - monitoring of mineral status;
 - management of ill-thrift, lameness/foot health, acidosis, staggers and other common diseases/disorders; and
 - monitoring of issues associated with parturition and reproduction, e.g. dystocia and mastitis, or challenges with calf health, e.g. pneumonia.

In addition, animal movement records and farm of origin, body condition scores, births (including stillbirths) and deaths (including euthanasia) must be recorded.

The health details of all incoming cattle must be checked and recorded.

All farm records concerning animal health and welfare, as well as any associated corrective actions taken, must be kept for a minimum of three years.

- H2 The animal health plan must be updated after any major health or welfare incident, e.g. a disease outbreak, or following significant changes to the production system.

In the case that a notifiable disease is discovered on the farm, it must be reported to the relevant authorities and SPCA Certified as a matter of urgency.

- H3 Each farm must have a euthanasia plan that describes the euthanasia process in detail, including the equipment used and the staff who are permitted to conduct the procedure.
- H4 Any animals identified with health or welfare concerns must be treated appropriately and monitored at least twice a day.

The establishment of a good working relationship with an experienced large animal veterinarian is highly recommended.

The animal health plan referred to in this document may come from various sources, e.g. farm diary, and is not intended to duplicate existing information.

Bull management

- H5 Upon arrival at the farm, new bulls must be:
- held in a quarantine area for a minimum of 48 hours, with feed and water available;
 - observed for any disease, injury or walking defects prior to use on the farm;
 - familiarised with the area and facilities prior to mating;
 - in good body condition when they arrive on the farm and prior to mating, with a recommended BCS of between 6 – 7; and
 - unloaded carefully into the yards.

For the avoidance of doubt, bulls must not be jumped from the back of a truck into a paddock.

- H6 The standards in this document for feed, water, and shade and shelter, apply to all bulls while they are on the farm.
- H7 Bulls must be monitored during mating to detect potential issues. If any problems are observed, e.g. lameness or abnormal behaviour during mounting, the bull must be removed for treatment and the corrective action taken, documented.

The selection of bulls for calving ease and polled genetics is recommended for the welfare of the cow and resulting calf.

Breeding

- H8 All breeding on the farm must make full use of trait selection that improves animal welfare. This may include cattle temperament, calving ease, dam factors and the use of polled genetics.
- H9 Benchmarking of assisted calving percentages alongside a breeding programme is required.
- The number of assisted calvings must not exceed 3 % of all calving annually. Where this threshold is exceeded, farm planning via trait selection for welfare improvement, must be used to reduce this.
- Where assisted births exceed 5 % for heifers, and 1 % for adult cattle, reassessment of the breeding programme is required.
- H10 Breeds of pedigree beef cattle that require high levels of intervention at parturition, e.g. caesarean section, are prohibited.
- H11 Only natural breeding and artificial insemination (AI) are permitted for breeding purposes.
- H12 Calving aids must only be used in emergency situations and are restricted to manual methods, not motorised ones.
- Similarly, caesarean sections must not be used routinely and must be performed by a registered veterinarian.

H13 Use of the Blockey test or any other adverse serving capacity test for bulls, which uses restrained heifers or cows, is prohibited.

Pharmaceutical use

H14 Staff involved in the administration of pharmaceuticals must be trained and competent to do so.

All equipment used must be calibrated and tested regularly, e.g. weigh scales and drench guns.

H15 Routine use of pharmaceuticals for the induction of parturition is prohibited.

Induction may only be used in exceptional circumstances, where the health/welfare of the cow or calf is at risk of serious compromise. In such cases, the procedure must be performed by a registered veterinarian and the following details documented:

- date;
- time;
- attending veterinarian;
- reason for treatment;
- number of animals treated; and
- the outcome of treatment.

H16 Therapeutic antibiotics must only be used where they have been prescribed by a registered veterinarian for the treatment of a specific, diagnosed condition, disease or injury.

H17 Pharmaceuticals must be stored correctly, be in-date, licensed for use in New Zealand and only administered as per the manufacturer's guidelines on the label.

Pharmaceuticals may only be used 'off-label' with prior veterinary approval. Such approval must follow the relevant Ministry for Primary Industries guidelines⁴ and be accompanied by a signed and dated declaration from the veterinarian that 'off-label' use was justified.

H18 All pharmaceutical treatments must be safely discarded after their expiration date.

H19 Up-to-date records must be kept of all treatments administered to cattle, including:

- pharmaceutical name, administration method and dose rate;
- reason for administration and the result of treatment;
- date(s) administered;
- withholding period; and
- animal identification.

⁴ <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/processing/agricultural-compounds-and-vet-medicines/acvm-guidance-for-veterinarians/#using-products-off-label>

The animal health plan should include protocols addressing the usage, storage and monitoring of antibiotic treatments and a strategy for the reduction of their use. Protocols should be in line with the recommendations of the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) policy on judicious use of antimicrobials.

Establishing an antimicrobial stewardship plan on farm is highly recommended.

Surgical husbandry procedures

- H20 Surgical husbandry procedures must only be performed by a registered veterinarian, or by trained and competent staff who have been approved by a registered veterinarian and only then in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- H21 Staff undertaking any surgical husbandry procedure must be trained to recognise the early signs of distress, injury or ill-health in the animal(s) being handled.
- H22 Surgical husbandry procedures must not be performed on animals less than 24 hours old and the procedures must only be conducted where animals can be expected to make a full recovery, without experiencing unnecessary pain or distress.
- H23 Animals must be humanely restrained and appropriately sedated (if required), so that they do not injure themselves or other cattle while surgical husbandry procedures are being performed.
- H24 All equipment used for surgical husbandry procedures must be clean, well-maintained, in full working order and appropriate for the procedure being undertaken.
- H25 Animals must be given pre- and post-operative pain relief, regardless of their age, in order to minimise pain and distress.
- H26 Records must be kept of all surgical procedures carried out. Records must include:
- the name of the procedure performed;
 - the date performed;
 - the animal ID;
 - the initials of the person performing the procedure; and
 - the reason why the procedure was medically necessary.
- H27 Once the procedure is completed, animals must be visually assessed at least twice during the 24 hours' post-surgery. Further additional checks must be made, and remedial action taken, if any concerns are noted.

It is recommended to seek advice from your veterinarian concerning current pain relief available for painful husbandry practices in cattle.

Disbudding

- H28 If disbudding is conducted, the breeding programme must demonstrate adequate selection for, and sourcing of, naturally polled cattle, unless otherwise agreed to, in writing, by SPCA Certified.

H29 Where disbudding is required, it must be done using thermal cautery, as soon as prominent horn buds have formed. Disbudding should be performed before calves reach six weeks of age and must be done by the time that they reach three months of age.

Pre and post-operative pain relief must be given to all animals being disbudded, regardless of their age.

H30 Disbudded calves must be inspected daily, for a minimum of two weeks after the procedure and any infected wounds must be treated and recorded in the animal health plan.

H31 Disbudding using caustic chemicals, scooping or amputation is prohibited.

In cases where calves are sourced from dairy genetics, disbudding may be required.

The use of local anaesthetic, sedation and ongoing pain relief, i.e. Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) for disbudding is highly recommended.

Dehorning

H32 Where polled cattle cannot be sourced; horn tipping or horn trimming should be used in preference to dehorning.

H33 Dehorning must be the method of last resort and may only take place where the horn is likely to cause injury or damage to the animal itself. Dehorning must only be conducted by a registered veterinarian and must be done using appropriate pain relief.

Castration

H34 Calves destined for slaughter prior to sexual maturity must not be castrated.

H35 Castration, using the most humane method available, must be carried out by three months of age, for all male calves not destined for slaughter prior to sexual maturity.

H36 Pre- and post-pain relief for castration must be used, regardless of calf age.

Inspection of animals

H37 Cattle must be inspected regularly, in order to ensure that they do not show signs of lameness, injury, disease, distress, abnormal behaviour, aggression, loss of body condition or other issues of concern.

Where an animal shows any signs of the above, it must be appropriately treated and monitored more frequently than normal. Veterinary advice must be sought if the problem is serious or persists and if treatment is not possible, the animal must be humanely euthanased without delay.

H38 Staff conducting herd inspections must be trained and competent to perform such inspections in a careful and respectful manner, which allows them to observe cattle without the risk of the animals becoming distressed. 🐾

- H39 All abnormalities observed during animal inspections must be documented in the animal health plan, along with the remedial action that was taken.
- H40 Inspections must increase to at least daily where cattle are within four days of their expected calving date and during the first week post-calving.
- Pre-calving inspections should be carried out from a distance and with a minimum of disturbance, in order to reduce animal stress, which could lead to dystocia or delays in parturition. This is especially important when dealing with heifers or animals with a history of birthing problems.
- H41 All calving issues, e.g. dystocia, must be recorded if they occur.
- H42 Calving must take place as close to the cattle yards as possible, but not in them, so that assistance is on hand if needed.
- H43 Animal inspections must occur at least twice a day during severe environmental conditions, or where animal welfare issues have been identified. Such inspections must continue until conditions have returned to normal.

Animal identification

- H44 Animal identification procedures must be performed by a registered veterinarian, or by trained and competent staff, using equipment that is clean, well-maintained, in full working order and appropriate for the task.
- H45 The following methods of permanent animal identification are acceptable:
- Ear tagging (metal or plastic).
 - Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) ear tagging.
 - Electronic Identification (EID) ear tagging.
 - Microchipping and/or electronic transponders.
- Ear marking or notching is not an acceptable form of permanent identification.
- H46 Following SPCA Certification, no animal born on the farm is to be ear marked or ear notched and SPCA Certified must be informed before ear marked or ear notched animals are brought onto an SPCA Certified farm.
- H47 Temporary identification methods, e.g. paints, dyes and wax markers, may be used to identify animals, providing that they are specially formulated for use on animals.
- H48 Only one tag (metal or plastic) may be applied to each ear. The exception is where an RFID or EID tag is used in addition to a conventional metal or plastic tag, in which case, two tags per ear is permitted.
- H49 Where the ear is pierced, tagging equipment must be disinfected between cattle, in order to reduce the spread of infection.
- H50 Hot branding and face branding are prohibited.

- H51 Freeze branding must only take place when an easily visualized, permanent identification is required, and less invasive methods of identification are not satisfactory. A competent, experienced operator must carry out the procedure and must provide appropriate pain relief to the animal. The process and procedure must be documented, along with a justification for why freeze branding was necessary.
- H52 Cattle must be restrained with care and in a manner that does not result in injury to themselves, other animals or operators.

Euthanasia and mortality

- H53 All cases of death and euthanasia must be investigated and recorded in the animal health plan.

For death, the details recorded must include:

- the animal's identification (if available);
- the time and date when the animal was discovered; and
- the cause of death (where known).

For euthanasia, the details recorded must include:

- the animal's identification (if available);
- the reason for, and method of, euthanasia;
- the time and date when the animal was discovered, when euthanasia was performed and when the animal was confirmed dead;
- the veterinarian's advice regarding euthanasia (if this was needed);
- the staff involved and their role in the process; and
- the method used to restrain the animal (if required).

Where practical, steps must be taken to prevent the issue from occurring again.

- H54 If there is any question as to whether euthanasia is required, a registered veterinarian must be contacted immediately to advise whether treatment is possible.

If the veterinarian cannot provide advice in a timely fashion, e.g. within 2 – 4 hours of the question arising, then the animal must be euthanased, in order to avoid unnecessary suffering.

- H55 Euthanasia must only be performed by trained staff or a registered veterinarian. Staff responsible for conducting euthanasia must be appropriately trained, competent for the role and named in the animal health plan.

- H56 All equipment used for euthanasia, must be maintained in correct working order and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

- H57 All cattle must be handled, restrained and euthanased in a manner that does not cause additional, unnecessary pain, fear or distress to them.

Where there is not a risk to human safety, animals must be euthanased where they are found and must not be dragged, pulled, lifted or otherwise moved while still alive.

- H58 Acceptable methods of euthanasia must ensure a rapid and humane death. They include:
- captive bolt, followed within fifteen seconds, by pithing or bleeding out; or
 - gunshot to the head, followed within fifteen seconds, by bleeding out.

NB. The choice of method used will vary depending on factors such as animal age and sex. For the avoidance of doubt, blunt force trauma is not an acceptable method for euthanasing calves.

- H59 Cattle must be immediately rendered insensible and must remain this way until death occurs.

The signs of an effective stun include:

- immediate animal collapse;
- a lack of normal, rhythmic breathing or vocalization;
- eyes fixed forward with a glazed expression;
- a lack of corneal reflex (no blinking when the eye is touched);
- no attempt to lift the head; and
- no attempt to regain an upright position.

If an animal shows any sign of regaining consciousness, it must be immediately re-stunned, and the effectiveness of the re-stun confirmed.

- H60 Where captive bolt guns are used, they must be positioned correctly for stunning to be effective and the operator must assess the effectiveness of the stun before bleeding out or pithing occurs.

Where firearms are used, the muzzle of the weapon must never be held against the animal's head and the operator must be confident of causing death on the first shot.

- H61 When done, pithing must be conducted using a flexible, strong, rigid, rod, inserted into the hole in the animal's head and moved vigorously around, in order to destroy the tissue in the animal's brain, brainstem and spinal cord. Animals that have been pithed are not to be used for human consumption.

- H62 Staff conducting the euthanasia process must remain with the animal until death is confirmed. The signs of death in cattle include:

- a complete lack of the corneal reflex;
- a complete lack of breathing for five minutes;
- a complete lack of heartbeat for five minutes;
- a relaxed jaw, with a floppy tongue;
- dilated pupils;
- no response when the nose is firmly pinched;
- a change in the colour of the mucous membranes, from pink to grey; and
- the onset of rigor mortis.

- H63 The carcasses of all euthanased animals and any animals found dead, must be disposed of in accordance with the relevant local Council regulations and in a manner that does not put other animals or people at risk of disease.

Carcasses must be protected from pests, and from being disturbed by other animals.

Nothing outlined in this section is intended to discourage the prompt diagnosis and treatment of any sick or injured cattle.

When used, euthanasia must ensure a rapid, humane death. It must be undertaken where:

- ***there is likely to be an unacceptable delay in treating an animal's source of suffering;***
- ***the animal is failing to respond to treatment;***
- ***the source of suffering is unknown, untreatable or severe; or***
- ***where transporting the animal for any reason would aggravate the condition or cause unnecessary pain or distress.***

It is recommended that a minimum of two members of farm staff are trained and competent in appropriate euthanasia techniques.

Biosecurity

H64 Where animals are brought into the herd, whether purchased or temporarily kept on the farm, they must:

- be sourced from low risk herds (ideally ones that are SPCA Certified);
- be the minimum number required, based on the feed that is available; and
- be quarantined for a minimum of 48 hours, before being introduced to the existing herd.

In addition, the source of the animals must be recorded, in case health or welfare issues arise and it becomes necessary to trace animals back to the farm of origin.

H65 A detailed biosecurity plan must be created and available to view on the farm. Staff must be familiar with and able to access this information. As a minimum, the plan must address the following requirements:

- the identification of all farm visitors, e.g. through a sign in book;
- the provision of Personal Protective Equipment for staff and visitors;
- sanitary facilities, including hand washing facilities, a foot bath with disinfectant, and a dedicated scrubbing brush for boot cleaning;
- the provision of a designated area for the entry of incoming stock, visitors, trucks and equipment, which is separate from the area where cattle are kept;
- the pest control procedures in place and location of relevant equipment; and
- the cleaning, sanitation, waste and carcass removal procedures.

H66 All pest control programmes must be humanely managed. Preferable methods of pest control include:

- physical exclusion methods;

- removal of elements in the vicinity that may encourage rodents and other pest species; and
- ensuring facilities are maintained in a clean and tidy condition, in order to reduce the risk of rodent and pest animal movement.

Where lethal control is used, the extent of the pest problem must be assessed at least annually, in order to ensure that lethal control is still warranted, and that it meets the requirements of the relevant regulatory authority.

To minimise the risk of disease, it is recommended that farms operate as a closed herd, with no incoming animals and no shared pastures or facilities. If this is not possible, then strict quarantine and record keeping is essential.

Appropriate Behavioural Interactions



Provide sufficient space, proper facilities, congenial company and appropriately varied conditions

Sourcing of beef cattle

- B1 Cattle must be kept in stable groups throughout their lives including, where possible, during natural weaning. 🐄

It is the intention of SPCA Certified that cattle produced under this standard are only moved off the farm for slaughter. In other words, that they are born, raised and live out their productive lives on the same SPCA Certified property.

Handling and moving cattle

- B2 All beef cattle operations must have access to equipment and/or facilities for the safe handling, restraint, treatment, segregation, loading and unloading of cattle.

Facilities must be constructed and maintained in a way that minimises the risk of illness, injury or distress to cattle.

- B3 Low-stress handling and husbandry techniques must be used when handling and moving cattle. 🐄

Low-stress animal handling procedures must be included in the animal health plan and made accessible to all personnel.

- B4 The use of electric prodders or goads is prohibited, unless there is a definite and unavoidable risk to human life or to the animal in question. Even then, the use of the prodder or goad must be the minimum necessary to move the animal out of harm, at which point it must no longer be used.
- B5 On arrival at the yards or handling facilities, cattle must be allowed enough time (approximately 20 minutes) to settle, before further movement or husbandry procedures are undertaken.
- B6 Unnecessary mixing of cattle must be avoided.
- B7 Stable groups of cattle must never be separated unless absolutely necessary.
- B8 Dogs must not be used in yards. Where they are used, they must be kept under control at all times and must not be permitted to cause physical injury to cattle.
- B9 Tails must not be aggressively twisted to move cattle.
- B10 Vehicles must not be used to physically push or pull animals and must not strike the cattle at any time when they are in use.
- B11 Calves must never be handled roughly or be dragged or pulled by any part of their body.

Behavioural enrichment

- B12 All cattle must be able to access objects within all pastures, on which to scratch or groom, e.g. trees or fixed structures. 🐾

Managers, stock-keepers and other staff

- B13 Manager(s) must ensure that all staff directly involved with cattle have access to, are familiar with, and adhere to the relevant Codes of Welfare and the most recent version of this document.
- B14 The farm must have a written policy of what actions will be taken should an employee be found to have been negligent in their role and responsibilities, in relation to animal welfare.
- B15 If one does not already exist, a policy that allows staff to report any concerns they have regarding cattle health and welfare, must be developed.

Where concerns are raised, an immediate investigation must be conducted by the owner, in order to ensure problems are rectified without delay.

- B16 Formal animal welfare, health and husbandry training, e.g. technical training programmes and workshops, should be offered for up-skilling staff, where this is appropriate for the position.

Training records must be available to view on request.

- B17 Specific to their area of work and responsibilities, staff must be able to demonstrate a good working knowledge of the health and husbandry of cattle. This may include: 🐾
- recognising the signs of common diseases, understanding their prevention and control, and knowing when to seek management or veterinary support;
 - recognising the signs of pain and injury in cattle and calves, and how to manage them appropriately;
 - having an understanding of low-stress handling techniques, including the use of appropriate facilities and equipment for moving calves and cattle;
 - recognising normal and abnormal behavior, including fear and distress;
 - understanding the principles of good nutrition for cattle and calves and how to assess feed conditions;
 - understanding and being able to body condition score cattle;
 - being able to assess pasture quality and quantity;
 - having knowledge of calving, calving issues and the care of newborn calves, including the ability to identify risks associated with calving; and
 - having knowledge of painful husbandry procedures and appropriate methods to reduce acute and chronic pain, and suffering.
- B18 Staff must be able to take action to seek professional help if they are unsure of, or are unfamiliar with, any behavioural or physical symptoms shown by cattle.
- B19 Staff who are undergoing training, must work in conjunction with fully trained, competent and experienced stock-keeper(s), until they are fully trained themselves. Members of staff or external workers must not carry out tasks that they have not been trained in or are not competent in performing.
- B20 Cattle must be cared for by a sufficient number of staff, in order to ensure that their needs are met in a compassionate manner. 🐾

The initial and continued training of staff working with cattle is important in promoting a high standard of animal welfare, as is the ability to demonstrate and practice positive and compassionate animal handling. 🐾

Where appropriate for the position, formal animal welfare training is recommended.

END OF STANDARDS

Appendix

Records required

Records	Standard(s)	Description
Seasonal		
Body Condition Score	N8	Score at weaning, mid-winter, pre-calving and mating. Note areas of concern and remedial action taken.
Annual		
Animal health plan	H1 & H2	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• disease and parasite plans;• mineral status;• animal health and welfare indicators;• animal movements on/off farm;• health status of incoming animals; and• any births/deaths and BCS scores not recorded elsewhere. Update following major incidents and retain records for three years.
Biosecurity plan	H65	Review and update as necessary.
Breeding plan	H9	Record number of assisted calvings and review programme if needed.
Emergency preparedness plan	E34	Review and update as necessary.
Feed supply plan	N6	Plan in place and available for inspection.
Pest control plan	H66	Review at least annually where lethal control options are used, otherwise keep for inspection if requested.
Trace element supplementation programme	N5	Review and update as necessary.

Every three years

Water quality	N16	Retain lab reports for inspection.
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Other

Animal welfare policy	B14	Policy in place.
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Bull management	H7	Record corrective action taken for any bull with problems during mating.
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Calving issues (every occurrence)	H41	Record all calving issues that occur.
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Euthanasia & mortality (every occurrence)	H3 & H53	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• animal ID;• reason and method;• time and date;• time of death;• vet advice (if given);• staff involved; and• any restraint used. For mortality, record cause of death if known.
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Housing of cattle (every occurrence)	E10	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• date;• duration;• number of animals;• reason; and• date housing ended.
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Inductions (every occurrence)	H15	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• date;• time;• vet attending;• reason;• number of animals induced; and• the outcome of treatment.
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Off-label drug use (every occurrence)	H17	Retain veterinary declaration for each off-label use.
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Pharmaceutical use (every occurrence)	H19	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drug name; • administration method; • dose; • reason for treatment; • date(s) of treatment; • result of treatment; • withholding period; and • animal ID.
Site plan	E1	Must be available for inspection.
Staff training (every occurrence)	B16	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of staff member; • date and type of training; and • any qualification received. Retain training records for inspection.
Surgical procedures (every occurrence)	H26	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of procedure; • date; • animal ID; • initials of operator; and • the reason for performing the procedure.
Transport records (every occurrence)	E32	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name and address of destination/ slaughterhouse; • name of transport company; • number and age of cattle; • time when food/water was withdrawn; • time of yarding and loading; • number of animals unfit for transport (and reason why); and • time of departure. Also include a signed 'Fitness for Transport' declaration.
Welfare reporting policy	B15	Policy in place.



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