



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 programme designed to celebrate good farming and raise animal welfare above current legal requirements. The 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 members to demonstrate that they apply a high level of animal welfare to their farming operations.

Certification is given to members, which may include farmers, distributors, food 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, including those that buy in dairy calves for finishing.

It does NOT include stand-alone calf rearing operations where unweaned dairy calves are exclusively reared for on-selling to finishing farms.

IMPORTANT: SPCA Certified does not allow the farming of beef cattle in feedlots.

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 must 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 intended 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 \(Care and Procedures\) Regulations 2018](#)
- [Code of Welfare: Sheep and Beef Cattle 2018](#)
- [Code of Welfare: Painful Husbandry Procedures 2018](#)
- [Code of Welfare: Transport within New Zealand 2018](#)
- [Code of Welfare: Commercial Slaughter 2018](#)
- [Code of Welfare: Dogs 2018](#)

Framework of the SPCA Certified Standards

Animals are sentient¹, meaning they have feelings, perceptions, and experiences that matter to them. These can be positive as well as negative, thereby impacting on the animal's welfare and its overall quality of life.

The framework for the SPCA Certified standards has therefore been derived from the Five Domains model of animal welfare². The Five Domains model is a holistic animal welfare assessment tool which describes welfare as the balance between positive and negative experiences and feelings.

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.



Accordingly, SPCA Certified standards not only aim to minimise avoidable negative experiences (e.g. fear, pain, and distress), but provide opportunities for positive experiences (e.g. comfort, pleasure) through engaging choices, free movement, and appropriate social interaction.

¹ In 2015, the Animal Welfare Act 1999 was amended to include a statement acknowledging animal sentience.

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](#)

To achieve this the following are necessary:

- caring, responsible, and forward-thinking management
- trained, competent, and conscientious stockpersons
- safe environment, facilities, and equipment for animals; and
- low-stress handling.

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 euthanised on farm.

Where contractors are brought onto the farm to work with beef cattle, it is the responsibility of the member/farmer to ensure they comply with the law and the SPCA Certified Beef Cattle Standards.

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.

Dairy calves reared for beef production on an SPCA Certified dairy farm must be reared according to the SPCA Certified dairy cattle standards until they leave the farm for processing or finishing on another farm.

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

For more information about SPCA Certified, including types of membership, complaints, other procedures, and the independent auditing process, please contact certified@spca.nz or visit the website (www.spcacertified.nz).

Any serious animal welfare complaints or Animal Welfare Act breaches on farm must be reported directly to the Ministry for Primary Industries animal welfare complaints hotline at **0800 0083 33** and SPCA Certified notified as soon as possible.

SPCA Certified Standards for Beef Cattle

Important notes:

- Section titles and their accompanying descriptions are taken from the Five Domains Model.
- Unless stated otherwise, all standards apply equally to adult cattle (including heifers, cows, bulls, and steers) and 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.
- To avoid unnecessary duplication, existing information/records from other sources can be used to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the SPCA Certified standards. Electronic records are acceptable if they can be accessed by SPCA Certified during audits.
- SPCA Certified templates (e.g. health plan, biosecurity plan, etc) can be requested from certified@spca.nz and may be used where current records do not exist.

Note on working dogs


All dog-related animal welfare regulations and the requirements of the Code of Welfare for Dogs (2018) apply to working dogs on the property and must always be followed. Farmers using dogs to manage cattle must ensure that the dogs are properly fed and watered, well exercised, kept in good overall condition, and are provided with suitable accommodation that is kept clean, habitable, is of appropriate size, and which provides effective shade and shelter.

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

Positive Mental Experience



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

The cow icon  indicates those standards and recommendations that provide opportunities for 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 and health requirements of cattle at all stages of life and production. At times when pasture is of low quality or quantity, feed supplementation is required.

N2 A written plan to adequately manage feed supply is required for periods when there may be limited feed, such as during winter, dry summers, drought, and acute weather events (e.g. cyclones), and during different physiological stages of the life cycle (e.g. pregnancy, lactation).

Where applicable, the plan must identify potential risks of supplementary feed (e.g. crops, concentrates) to animal health and welfare and measures to be put in place to minimise these risks. This includes mitigation methods to prevent animals being exposed to increasingly muddy conditions when fed on crops.

N3 Where supplementary feed is provided, it must be:

- palatable;
- fed in appropriate amounts;
- introduced gradually (where required) and animals monitored for adverse effects;
- fed alongside appropriate fibre sources (where relevant); and
- freely available to prevent 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 mineral supplementation programme must be written and implemented in consultation with a veterinarian or farm consultant, and appropriate monitoring must be in place. Records must be available for inspection on request.

N6 Where the body condition score of any adult animal drops below 5 (on a scale from 1-10) timely corrective action must be taken.

Special attention must be paid to cows prior to calving to ensure BCS does not exceed 7.

N7 Body condition of each adult cow must be assessed and recorded at least four times each year. The times include:

- at weaning;
- mid-winter;
- pre-calving; and
- prior to mating.

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

Cattle should be offered a variety of nutritious herbages so they can choose their preferred feed, meet their individual nutritional needs, and experience different tastes and textures. 🐄

Body condition score may be assessed in any setting, including in the paddock, in the yards, or in the races. For a useful guide to body condition scoring beef cattle and for the Feedsmart Resource Book for feed planning, visit the [Beef + Lamb NZ Knowledge Hub](#).

Water

- N8 All cattle, including unweaned calves, must have easy access to a sufficient clean, palatable drinking water at all times to meet their requirements, including in holding yards.
- N9 Water delivery systems must be sufficient in number and size and maintained to ensure water is freely available, preventing competition for access between animals, and meeting daily demand across all seasons including peak drinking times.
- N10 Troughs must be provided at a height that allows calves and cattle to drink using a normal, comfortable drinking posture.
- N11 Where portable electric fences are used, they must be placed so as not to discourage cattle from accessing troughs.
- N12 The area surrounding troughs must be actively managed to ensure that it does not become flooded or increasingly muddy.
- N13 Troughs must be cleaned as required to maintain clean, palatable water.
- N14 Cattle must be fenced off or otherwise prevented from accessing surface water sources (e.g. ponds, dams, swamps).
- N15 Primary water sources must be tested every three years for contaminants (e.g. salinity, bacterial load, and mineral content) that may be harmful to the health of cattle or prevent cattle from drinking. Water must be tested more frequently where indicated (e.g. change in cattle drinking habits, animal health issues, after an adverse event, change in water smell, clarity or taste) to ensure it remains safe to drink.
- N16 Where a new water source is established that is not town water (e.g. dam or bore), it must be tested (see Standard N15) before cattle are given access to it.
- N17 An alternative source of water to the primary source must be available in the event of an emergency and identified on the emergency preparedness plan (see Standard E35).

Calves

Note: While beef calves are not commonly hand-reared on commercial farms, this may be necessary for some calves (e.g. orphaned calves and calves removed from their dam for health or welfare reasons).

N18 For unweaned calves younger than eight weeks, a hand-rearing management plan must be developed and approved by SPCA Certified. The plan must be implemented for all affected calves, including any unweaned calves brought onto the farm for finishing.

Good Environment



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

Site plan

- E1 A detailed site plan must be kept on farm, showing at least the layout and dimensions of:
- all buildings, yards, and pasture areas (including paddock numbers);
 - all natural and/or artificial shelter and shade provisions;
 - location of all water sources;
 - feed storage areas;
 - sanitary facilities for visitors/staff;
 - isolation/quarantine areas;
 - access roads and laneways;
 - all fenced waterways, ponds, etc; and
 - waste and carcass disposal areas.

Fencing

- E2 All fencing, including electric fencing, must be designed, constructed, and regularly inspected and maintained to minimise the risk of injury and unnecessary pain and distress to the cattle and to ensure cattle are securely contained.
- E3 Barbed wire fencing is only permitted for existing boundary fences. It must not be electrified.

Shade and shelter

- E4 Cattle must have free access to effective shade and shelter at all times to let them manage their own temperature, to mitigate the risk of heat and cold stress, and to provide additional opportunities to express normal behaviours such as resting and exploration. 🌿

- E5 Cattle must be checked daily while weather warnings are in place to ensure that the shade and shelter provided remain appropriate.
- E6 Where signs of heat or cold stress (e.g. increased respiration rate or panting, cattle huddling together) are observed, immediate remedial action must be taken and shade and shelter provisions reassessed to safeguard animal welfare going forward.
- E7 In weather conditions where yarding and moving cattle may lead to heat stress, these activities must be minimised. Risk mitigation measures must be in place to prevent heat stress or exhaustion from occurring where these activities cannot be avoided (e.g. rest breaks, access to water, effective shade, reduced stocking density).
- E8 Cows close to calving (around 14 days prior to expected calving date) and those with newborn calves must be provided with an environment that affords both the dam and newborn calf comfort and adequate protection from adverse weather conditions that may negatively impact their welfare. This includes the provision of suitable shade/shelter (e.g. hedge, shrubs, or artificial shelters) and suitable lying/calving surfaces (see Standard B17).

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.

Air temperatures as low as 20°C, especially in combination with high humidity, solar radiation, and low airflow, can negatively impact cattle welfare.

Shade and shelter can include natural and artificial structures, including windbreaks, treed areas, shade sails, lean-to structures, and shelterbelts. To ensure shade is effective, it is recommended that cattle can freely access shade areas with sufficient airflow that provide around 6m² of shaded space per animal.

Preparation for transport

- E9 Before loading, cattle must be assessed to ensure that they are fit for transport and able to withstand the entire journey without suffering pain or unnecessary distress. The assessment must take into consideration the animals':
- health condition;
 - body condition score (above BCS 4 (on a scale of 1-10));
 - age;
 - animal height;
 - the likely 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 and a record of the veterinarian's advice must be kept.

- E10 All cattle must be free from signs of injury or disease, including pink eye, to be eligible for transport. Any wounds or skin lesions identified must be fully healed and free from discharge.
- E11 Cattle that are unfit for transport must be given immediate remedial care, veterinary care, or be euthanised without delay.

- E12 Cows must not be selected for transport in their last third of pregnancy.
- E13 Cows must not be selected for transport for at least seven days after calving.
- E14 Calves must not be transported for at least seven days after weaning.
- E15 Where animals have undergone a painful husbandry procedure (e.g. castration) they must not be selected for transport for at least three weeks after the procedure.
- E16 Holding and loading facilities must be designed to facilitate ease of movement and reduce handling stress for cattle and stockpersons.
- E17 Cattle must not be kept on concrete for more than two hours before loading.
- E18 Cattle must be provided with free access to clean water and hay until immediately before loading.
- E19 Cattle must not be kept off green feed for more than eight hours before transport.
- E20 Holding yards must provide enough shade and shelter for all cattle contained. Where signs of heat or cold stress are evident during yarding, immediate remedial action must be taken.
- E21 Holding yards must provide enough space to allow all cattle to be able to stand up, lie down, and move freely.
- E22 Unfamiliar cattle must not be mixed prior to transport or during loading.
- E23 Loading facilities, including ramps, must have surfaces that are non-slip and must be maintained regularly.
- E24 Where adjustable or portable ramps are used, they must be able to firmly attach to prevent any gaps between ramp and loading platform or transport vehicle, and prevent ramp movement during loading and unloading.
- E25 Cattle must be allowed to load at their regular walking speed, without unnecessary force or noise.
- E26 The use of electric prodders or goads during loading/unloading is not permitted, unless there is a definite and unavoidable risk to human or animal health and welfare. Use must be the absolute minimum necessary to move the animal in that situation and must be discontinued immediately once harm is averted. They must never be used in situations where cattle are unable to move away. Use of prodders, where it occurs, must be recorded including the reason for use.
- E27 The owner or person in charge of the cattle must be present during loading.
- E28 When organising animals to be sent for slaughter, the person in charge must request animals to be sent to the closest abattoir so that animals are transported for the least amount of time and for no longer than eight hours (starting when the first animal is loaded and ending when the last animal is unloaded at the abattoir).
- E29 Where the closest abattoir is not used to minimise transport time, a reason for the decision must be recorded.

- E30 Transport of cattle between farms must not exceed eight hours.
- E31 Transport operators must be informed if cattle have been selected where transport may increase the risk of injuries and other welfare compromise (e.g. cattle taller than 1.4 m, horned animals) so operators can take appropriate action.
- E32 Where transport cannot be avoided during weather conditions conducive to heat stress, the person in charge of the cattle must engage with the transport operator to discuss potential heat stress mitigation methods (e.g. reducing stocking densities or transporting during the cool part of the day).
- E33 Transport records must be kept on farm and must include:
- the name and address of the final destination;
 - the name of the transport company used for each journey;
 - the number, 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 on farm and when the first animal is loaded onto the vehicle;
 - the number of animals found unfit for transport, the reasons why, and their fate; and
 - the time the vehicle left the farm.
- E34 A copy of contingency plans that outline how animal welfare will be protected in case of an emergency whilst being transported (e.g. vehicle delay, mechanical breakdown, major accident/weather event, traffic jam) must be requested from transport operators and be available for viewing (where possible).

Transport is a highly stressful experience for cattle. Careful planning is therefore required before transport to minimise the risk of distress and injury. The timing of moving cattle into the yards for transport to slaughter should be well planned between the farmer, transporter, and abattoir to minimise waiting times.

Provision of a comfortable surface, such as a grazed-out paddock, to allow cattle to lie down and rest prior to transport is recommended.

The angle of the on-farm loading ramp should not exceed 20 degrees for adult cattle.

It is recommended that all stockpersons involved in the cattle transportation process have formal training in animal handling and that they use the [Fit For Transport mobile app](#).

Emergency preparedness

- E35 An emergency preparedness (contingency) plan must be created, and all staff must be familiar with it.

The plan must clearly set out everyone's roles and responsibilities and must detail how the risk to cattle health and welfare will be minimised in an emergency (e.g. drought, flood, fire, storm, earthquake, and biosecurity breach).

Access to comfortable and dry lying areas must be considered alongside general provisions for feed, water, shade/shelter, and health.

- E36 The emergency preparedness plan must be reviewed annually and updated where major changes in management practices have occurred or where an emergency has been encountered and resolved.
- E37 Provision must be made to inspect the cattle as soon as possible when there is an event that may impact animal welfare, providing it is safe to do so.
- E38 If cattle are kept off paddock for any reason, this must be documented and SPCA Certified must be notified. Details must include:
- the date of being moved off paddock;
 - the duration of being kept off paddock;
 - the type, location and size of the off-paddock facilities;
 - the number of animals involved;
 - the date of access/return to the paddock (or movement off-farm/euthanasia); and
 - the reason for keeping cattle off paddock.

SPCA Certified does not support keeping beef cattle off paddock long-term. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where it is necessary or advantageous for animal welfare to do so for short periods of time (e.g. when dealing with pre-weaned calves without their dams, injured/diseased animals, in emergencies, or during extreme weather where conditions are beyond the animal's normal ability to cope).

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 A farm-specific and seasonally appropriate animal health plan must be created, implemented, and maintained in conjunction with a registered veterinarian (who visits the farm and sights the cattle at least once a year).

The plan must include:

- A preventative disease and parasite management plan covering vaccinations and drench programmes, foot health, identification of any endemic diseases on farm (e.g. Johne's disease), etc.

- A process for monitoring of mineral status.
- Provisions for isolation and care of sick and injured animals.
- A process for checking and recording the health details of incoming cattle (e.g. BVD status, Bovine Tuberculosis, pinkeye).
- A plan for the management of ill-thrift and common disease/disorders (e.g. lameness, acidosis, staggers, pinkeye).
- An antimicrobial stewardship plan, including confirmation that antibiotics will not be used prophylactically but only where they have been prescribed by a registered veterinarian for the treatment of a specific, diagnosed condition, disease, or injury.
- Provisions for pain relief for painful husbandry procedures and all painful conditions including, but not limited to, lameness, dystocia, mastitis, and pink eye.
- A process for monitoring and addressing issues associated with parturition and reproduction (e.g. dystocia, mastitis), as well as calf health concerns (e.g. pneumonia and scouring).
- Details on the weaning process (e.g. weaning start and end dates, weaning method, weaning weights).
- A euthanasia plan that describes the euthanasia process in detail, including the equipment used and the staff who are permitted to conduct the procedure.

H2 All farm records concerning animal health and welfare, as well as any associated corrective actions taken, must be available during audits.

H3 The animal health plan must be updated at least annually, after any major health or welfare incident (e.g. a disease outbreak), or following significant changes to the production system.

In the case of any exotic disease being confirmed on farm this must be reported to SPCA Certified as soon as possible after alerting Biosecurity New Zealand.

H4 Cattle identified with health and welfare concerns must be treated immediately, clearly identified, and monitored as often as appropriate, but at least daily.

H5 Where cattle are found dead this must be investigated and 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).

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

The antimicrobial stewardship plan should include protocols addressing the usage, storage, and monitoring of antimicrobial 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.

The use of wearable or remote technologies for monitoring the health and behaviour of animals is encouraged by SPCA Certified. However, it is not a replacement for close monitoring of animals by experienced and competent farm staff, especially for those animals that may be undergoing or recovering from treatment.

Inspection of animals

- H6 Cattle must be inspected regularly, and as often as necessary, to ensure any signs of lameness, injury, disease, distress, abnormal behaviour, excessive aggression, low body condition, or other issues of concern can be detected and timely remedial action is taken.
- H7 Inspections must occur at least daily where cattle are within four days of their expected calving date and must be carried out from a distance with a minimum of disturbance.
- H8 Calving must take place as close to the cattle yards as possible, but not in them, so that assistance is on hand if needed.
- H9 All calving issues must be recorded and, if required, a veterinarian must be contacted at the earliest sign of birth complications.
- H10 During the first week post-calving, cows and heifers must be inspected at least daily, more frequently if they are compromised.
- H11 Newly weaned calves must be inspected daily for at least a week post-weaning.
- H12 Animal inspections must occur at least daily during adverse weather that may negatively impact animal welfare. Such inspections must continue until conditions have returned to normal.

Animal identification

- H13 Animal identification procedures must be performed using equipment that is:
 - clean and disinfected between animals (where relevant);
 - well-maintained;
 - in full working order; and
 - appropriate for the task.
- H14 Ear marking and branding are not permitted.

- H15 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 are permitted.
- H16 Staff inserting ear tags must follow the manufacturer's guidelines, ensure they do not hit cartilage ridges and major blood vessels of the ear, and place tags so as to allow room for growth of the ear.
- H17 Temporary identification methods (e.g. paints, dyes, and wax markers) may be used to identify animals if they are specially formulated for use on animals.

Pain relief should be provided when tagging cattle.

Tagging wounds can take a long time to heal. Ear tags should be inspected regularly for up to twelve weeks post-tagging to allow treatment of any obvious infections.

Bull management

- H18 Upon arrival at the farm, new bulls must be:
- unloaded carefully into the yards;
 - held in a quarantine area (e.g. separate paddock) for a minimum of 14 days, with feed, water, and shade and shelter available at all times;
 - observed for any disease, injury, foot or leg defects, and/or gait abnormalities prior to use on the farm;
 - familiarised with the area and facilities prior to mating; and
 - in good body condition when they arrive on the farm and prior to mating, with a recommended BCS 6 - 7 (on a scale of 1 - 10).
- H19 Bulls must be monitored during mating to detect potential issues. If any problems are observed (e.g. lameness, ill health, lesions, inflammation, abnormal behaviour during mounting, or excessive aggression between bulls), the affected bulls must be removed, treated immediately if required, and the corrective action taken must be documented.

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

Breeding

- H20 All breeding on the farm must make use of trait selection that improves animal welfare. For example, cattle temperament (docility), calving ease, dam factors, and the use of polled genetics.
- H21 Where animal welfare problems related to the breeding programme are encountered, they must be recorded and the programme revised.

- H22 Heifers selected for mating must be well-grown (at least 300 kg or 60% mature cow live weight by 15 months), fed to support both the weight gain required for pregnancy and their own continued growth throughout gestation, and carefully observed around parturition.
- H23 All assisted calvings must be recorded along with their severity (e.g. 'Easy pull', 'Hard pull', or 'Vet assistance required').
- Where assisted calvings exceed 3% for heifers and 1% for adult cows, reassessment of the breeding programme is required.
- H24 Breeds of pedigree beef cattle that require high levels of intervention at parturition (e.g. caesarean section) are not permitted.
- H25 Only natural breeding and artificial insemination (AI) are permitted for breeding purposes.
- H26 The use of equine chorionic gonadotropin is not permitted.
- H27 Calving aids must only be used where the size or presentation of the calf requires it and must not be motorised (i.e. only manual methods can be used). Where there is no progress with a difficult calving, a veterinarian must be consulted.
- H28 Where calving assistance is required, obstetric lubricant must be used, and the cow must be given non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs) pain relief.
- H29 Caesarean sections must only be performed by a registered veterinarian where necessary for health and welfare reasons.
- H30 Use of the Blockey test, or any other adverse serving capacity test for bulls that uses restrained heifers or cows, is not permitted.
- H31 Electroejaculation of bulls is not permitted.

Pharmaceutical use

- H32 Administration of pharmaceuticals must be done under veterinary advice.
- H33 All pharmaceuticals must be kept in secure, lockable storage and a list of all pharmaceuticals used on the farm must be kept and made available for inspection during audit.
- H34 Induction of parturition may only be performed by a registered veterinarian and only in exceptional circumstances where the health/welfare of the cow or calf is at risk of serious compromise.
- H35 Pharmaceuticals must be:
- administered as per the manufacturer's guidelines on the label;
 - in-date;
 - be licensed for use in New Zealand unless otherwise authorised by a registered veterinarian;
 - dispensed at accurate dosages (i.e. assessment of live weight is required);

- administered with equipment that is fit for purpose; and
- safely discarded after the expiration date.

H36 Up-to-date records must be kept of all treatments administered to cattle, including:

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

As a guiding principle, SPCA Certified recommends the use of pain relief for all painful conditions.

Painful husbandry procedures

H37 Regardless of their age, cattle must be given effective pre- and post-operative pain relief (i.e. local anaesthetic and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)) to minimise pain and distress during and after painful husbandry procedures (including disbudding, dehorning, and castration). Post-operative pain relief must be long-acting (i.e. at least 48 hours).

H38 Staff undertaking painful husbandry procedures must only do so in accordance with the relevant regulations and must be able to recognise the early signs of distress, injury, or ill-health in the cattle being handled.

H39 Painful husbandry procedures must not be performed on calves less than 24 hours old, and the procedures must only be conducted where cattle can be expected to make a full recovery.

H40 Cattle must be restrained with care (see Standards B1 - B3) and appropriately sedated (if required), so that they do not injure themselves or other cattle while painful husbandry procedures are being performed.

H41 All equipment used for painful husbandry procedures must be clean, well-maintained, in full working order, and appropriate for the procedure being undertaken.

H42 Cattle must be visually assessed at least twice during the 24 hours following painful husbandry procedures and remedial action taken if problems occur.

H43 Records must be kept of all painful procedures carried out. Records must include:

- the type of procedure performed;
- the date performed;
- the animal ID;
- the type(s) of pain relief provided;
- the initials of the person performing the procedure; and
- the reason why the procedure was medically necessary.

Disbudding

- H44 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.
- H45 Where conducted, disbudding must be done after calves are a week old and before six weeks using thermal cautery, sedation, and appropriate pre- and post-operative pain relief (i.e. local anaesthetic and NSAIDs) regardless of calf age.
- H46 Disbudded calves must be inspected daily, for a minimum of two weeks after the procedure, and any infected wounds must be treated and recorded.
- H47 Disbudding using caustic chemicals, scooping, or amputation is not permitted.

Dehorning

- H48 Where polled cattle cannot be sourced and horn removal is deemed necessary (i.e. the horn is likely to cause injury or damage to the animal itself), the procedure must be approved in writing by SPCA Certified and must be conducted by a registered veterinarian using sedation and pre- and post-operative pain relief (i.e. local anaesthetic and NSAIDs).
- H49 Horn tipping is only permitted where necessary to protect cattle welfare and only if cutting into the sensitive tissue of the horn can be prevented.

Castration

- H50 Calves destined for slaughter prior to sexual maturity must not be castrated.
- H51 Castration, where conducted, must only be done using rubber rings designed for the purpose, must be carried out by three months of age, but preferably before four weeks of age, for all male calves destined for slaughter after reaching sexual maturity.
- H52 Pre- and post-operative pain relief for castration (i.e. local anaesthetic and NSAIDs) must be used regardless of calf age.
- H53 Surgical castration is not permitted unless it is undertaken by a registered veterinarian using sedation and pre-and post-operative pain relief.

Euthanasia

- H54 Euthanasia must be performed 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.

H55 There must be a robust process in place around the decision to euthanise animals, including seeking veterinary advice on whether treatment is possible or if euthanasia is required where there is any doubt on how to proceed. Responsible staff must be named in the animal health plan.

H56 All cattle to be euthanised must be handled and restrained (where required) with care, in a manner that does not cause unnecessary pain, fear, or distress.

Where there is no risk to human safety, animals must be euthanised where they are found and must not be dragged, pulled, lifted, or otherwise moved while still alive.

H57 Animals must be immediately rendered insensible (i.e. achieve insensibility quickly and on first attempt) using either a penetrative captive bolt or gunshot to the head, which must be followed within fifteen seconds by a secondary procedure (e.g. pithing, bleeding out, secondary shot) to ensure death.

If an animal shows any sign of regaining consciousness, the above must be repeated immediately. (see [Appendix 2](#) for more detail)

H58 The euthanasia method chosen must be appropriate for the animal (i.e. method may vary depending on factors such as age, sex, the presence of horns).

H59 Blunt-force trauma is not permitted.

H60 There must always be at least one person on the farm who is trained and competent in euthanasia of cattle of all ages.

H61 All equipment used for euthanasia must be maintained in correct working order and operated in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Equipment (where appropriate), as well as relevant servicing reports, must be made available for inspection during an audit.

H62 Staff euthanising animals must remain with the animal until they can confirm that the animal is dead. 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.

H63 For euthanasia, the details recorded must include:

- the animal's identification (if available);
- the reason for and method of euthanasia, including any veterinary advice received;
- the time and date when the animal was discovered and when the animal was killed;

- 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.

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

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

It is recommended that all staff are familiar with the contents of the [DairyNZ Humane Slaughter - On-farm Guidelines](#).

Biosecurity

H64 Where cattle are brought into the herd, whether purchased or temporarily kept on the farm, they must be kept in a separate area to the main herd for a minimum of 14 days to allow for health checking, drenching, and any vaccinations to occur.

SPCA Certified must be informed if any cattle brought onto the farm have ear markings or are branded.

H65 A detailed biosecurity plan must be 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, software or mobile Apps);
- 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 animals, 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 Pest control programmes must employ humane control methods, including, where relevant, physical exclusion and limiting access to food and nesting sites by maintaining sheds and the area around sheds and food storage areas in a clean and tidy condition.

Lethal control methods (traps and poisons) must only be used as a last resort, and in accordance with relevant legislation.

The extent of the pest problem must be assessed at least annually to determine if lethal control is still warranted.

To minimise the risk of disease, it is recommended that farms do not share paddocks or facilities.

A plan to discourage non-targeted animals from engaging with traps and poisons, if used, should be in place.

Where necessary, traps that have passed standardised welfare performance testing should be used in preference to other traps and poisons. A list of traps that have passed standardised welfare performance testing is available on [Bionet.NZ](https://www.bionet.nz) (under Welfare Performance of Animal Traps).

Appropriate Behavioural Interactions



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

Low-stress handling of cattle

- B1 All cattle operations must have access to equipment and facilities appropriate to the size of the cattle (e.g. age, breed) and for the safe handling, restraint, treatment, segregation, loading, and unloading of cattle. This includes facilities for the safe conduct of artificial insemination, veterinary interventions/procedures, and husbandry procedures.
- B2 Equipment and facilities must be fit for purpose and be constructed, operated, and maintained in a way that minimises the risk of illness, injury, or distress to both cattle and stockpersons.

This includes non-slip surfaces, the ability of cattle to move freely and comfortably, and ensuring that noise from equipment and facilities (e.g. gates, latches, and swinging chains), as well as from people and dogs, is kept to a minimum during handling and movement.
- B3 Low-stress handling and husbandry techniques must be used, ensuring cattle are handled, restrained, and moved in a calm and gentle manner, taking cattle behaviour into consideration.
- B4 The use of electric prodders or goads on farm is not permitted.
- B5 On arrival at the yards or handling facilities, cattle must be allowed enough time (at least 20 minutes) to settle before being drafted or before husbandry procedures are undertaken.
- B6 Moving cattle by twisting tails or using physical contact with vehicles is not permitted.
- B7 Cattle must never be handled roughly or be dragged/pulled by any part of their body.

- B8 Dogs must be well-trained, always kept under effective control, and must not be permitted to cause physical injury to cattle.

To mitigate stress, SPCA Certified recommends the use of maternal bovine appeasing substance (appeasing pheromone) prior to stressful events (e.g. transport, weaning).

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Social environment

- B9 The use of saleyards for sourcing or selling cattle is not permitted.
- B10 Cattle must be kept in stable social groups throughout their lives including, where possible, during weaning, and unnecessary mixing of cattle must be avoided. 🐾
- B11 Where movement between groups is unavoidable (e.g. to protect animal welfare), pairs or small groups of cattle must be moved, rather than individual animals.
- B12 Cattle that have to be isolated (e.g. due to injury/disease) must be kept with at least one companion or must be able to see, smell, and hear other cattle.

SPCA Certified would prefer to see all cattle produced under this standard only moved off the farm for slaughter. In other words, that they are born, raised, and live out their productive lives on the same property. Cattle moved to another property will no longer be covered under SPCA Certified unless the receiving farm is also an SPCA Certified member.

SPCA Certified does not permit the use of saleyards for sourcing or selling cattle due to multiple loading and unloading events, an unsuitable environment (e.g. a lack of adequate space and shelter, mixing of unfamiliar animals), and restricted access to feed and water.

Weaning

- B13 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 weaning occurs before six months of age, the reason for it must be recorded in the animal health plan.

- B14 During weaning, calves must be moved to an area they are familiar with and must have access to shade and shelter and familiar high-quality feed.
- B15 The use of nose-flaps to prevent calves from suckling before full separation from the dam is not permitted.

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

Low-stress weaning methods (e.g. fence line weaning) are recommended where natural weaning is not practised. The use of nose-flaps for two-step weaning can lead to nasal injuries and discomfort and is therefore not permitted.

Physical environment

B16 Cattle must be provided with sufficient space to perform normal behaviours including grazing, foraging, walking, lying in extended positions, grooming, separating for calving, and withdrawing from aggressive interactions.

Space must also be sufficient to prevent competition for resources and allow for synchronous behaviours (i.e. all cattle are able to graze or lie at the same time).

B17 Cattle must have access to soft, compressible surfaces that are dry (i.e. surfaces do not become increasingly muddy and are free from surface water), so they can lie and rest comfortably for as long as they choose to.

During winter, it is recommended that cattle are scored for cleanliness on a regular basis to ensure that their lying areas are comfortable and dry, and that remedial action can be taken if very dirty cattle are seen.

Behavioural enrichment

B18 All pastures must contain objects on which cattle can scratch or groom themselves (e.g. trees, tree stumps, brushes, posts).

Managers, stockpersons, and other staff

B19 Manager(s) must ensure that all staff directly involved with cattle have access to, are familiar with, and adhere to the relevant legislation, Codes of Welfare, and the most recent version of the SCPA Certified beef cattle standards.

B20 Staff must have a good understanding of low-stress handling methods and cattle behaviour.

B21 Staff and external workers must not carry out tasks that they have not been trained in or are not competent in performing.

B22 Staff or external workers must be trained and competent to perform:

- herd inspections in a careful and respectful manner;
- body condition scoring;
- identification procedures;

- administration of pharmaceuticals;
- painful husbandry procedures (where undertaken);
- artificial insemination and pregnancy examinations; and
- euthanasia (i.e. capable of appropriately applying the method (e.g. placement, calibre used), ensuring its effectiveness in causing immediate insensibility, ensuring the animal does not recover, and killing the animal).

A full list of required knowledge and competencies for stockpersons and other staff working with the cattle are listed in [Appendix 3](#).

- B23 Formal animal health and husbandry training (e.g. technical training programmes and workshops) must be offered for up-skilling staff where available and where appropriate for the position.
- B24 Staff who are undergoing training must work in conjunction with fully trained, competent, and experienced stockpersons until they are fully trained and competent themselves.
- B25 All training records must be available to view on request.
- B26 The farm must have a written animal welfare complaints policy or relevant information contained within the staff contracts that:
- states the actions to be taken should an employee be found to have been negligent in their role and responsibilities in relation to animal welfare; and
 - encourages employees to report any concerns they have regarding actions or situations that negatively impact cattle health and welfare.
- B27 Where a complaint is made, this must be investigated immediately, and any problems must be rectified without delay to safeguard animal welfare.
- B28 Owners, managers, stockpersons, and other staff working with the animals must not have had a conviction for animal welfare offences.

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.

Formal animal welfare training is recommended for all staff working with cattle.

Resources on low-stress handling are available online (e.g. [Safe and Low Stress Cattle Handling Manual](#), [Behavioral Principles of Livestock Handling](#)).

Any serious animal welfare complaints or Animal Welfare Act breaches on farm must be reported directly to the Ministry for Primary Industries animal welfare complaints hotline at 0800 0083 33 and SPCA Certified notified as soon as possible.

END OF STANDARDS

Appendix 1:

Records required

Records	Standard(s)	Description
Daily		
Inspections	H6, H7, H10-H12	Record all abnormalities and action taken during daily/regular inspections.
Seasonal		
Body Condition Score	N7	Score at least four times each year. Note areas of concern and remedial action taken.
Annual		
Animal health plan	H1 & H2	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventative disease and parasite management plan (e.g. vaccinations and drench programmes) • Monitoring of mineral status • Provision for isolation and care of sick and injured animals • Biosecurity precautions – incoming animals • Management of all common diseases/ disorders • Antimicrobial stewardship plan • Pain management plan • Monitoring and addressing issues associated with parturition, reproduction, calf health, and weaning • Euthanasia plan Health and welfare records available for inspection.
Animal health plan	H3	Review annually and update as necessary (i.e. after major events).
Biosecurity plan	H65	Review, update as necessary.
Breeding plan	H21 & H23	Record breeding impacts and revise as necessary. Record number of assisted calvings and review programme if needed.

Emergency preparedness plan	E35 & E36	Review and update as necessary.
Feed supply plan	N2	Review and update as necessary. Assess animal welfare risks regularly.
Mineral supplementation programme	N5	Review and update as necessary.
Pest control programme	H66	Review at least annually where lethal control options are used and update programme as necessary.
Every three years		
Water quality	N15	Salinity, bacteria, and mineral content. Retain lab reports for inspection.
Other		
Animal welfare complaints policy	B26	Policy in place.
Bull management	H19	Record corrective action taken for any bull with problems during mating or because of bullying.
Caesarean (every occurrence)	H29	Retain veterinary record and provide reasons for procedure.
Calf rearing plan	N18	Retain copy of SPCA approval for inspection where applicable. Implemented where hand-rearing occurs, including for unweaned calves brought onto the farm for finishing.
Calving issues (every occurrence)	H9 & H23	Record all calving issues that occur.
Equipment servicing reports	H61	Report available for inspection where service undertaken.

Euthanasia & mortality (every occurrence)	H5 & H63	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.
Horn removal (every occurrence)	H44	Retain copy of SPCA approval for inspection where applicable.
Induction (every occurrence)	H34	Retain veterinary record and provide reasons for procedure.
Keeping cattle off paddock (every occurrence)	E38	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date; • duration; • number of animals; • reason; and • date housing ended.
Off-label drug use and veterinary prescriptions for antibiotics (every occurrence)	H35 & H36	Retain veterinary declaration for each off-label use. Retain copy of prescriptions for antibiotics.
Painful husbandry procedures (every occurrence)	H43	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name of procedure; • date; • animal ID; • name (and signature) of operator; • initials of the operator; and • the reason for performing the procedure.

Pharmaceutical use (every occurrence)	H36	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drug name; • prescribing veterinarian; • administration method; • dose; • reason for treatment; • date(s) of treatment; • result of treatment; • withholding period; and • animal ID.
Prodder use during loading/unloading	E26	Record every use of electric prodders during loading/unloading and the reason for use.
Site plan	E1	Must be available for inspection.
Staff training (every occurrence)	B25	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.
Transport contingency plan	E34	Requested from transport operator and copy must be available for inspection.
Transport fitness consult	E9	Record of veterinary advice kept and available for inspection.
Transport records (every occurrence)	E33	Record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • name and address of destination/ abattoir; • name of transport company; • number and age of cattle; • time when green feed/water was withdrawn; • time of yarding and loading; • number of animals unfit for transport (and reason why and their fate); • time of departure; and • arrival time where possible.
Treatment records	H2, H4 & H42	Retain records of treatment and management of diseases and injuries.

Water testing – new source	N16	Test every new source that is not town water before animals get access.
Weaning early	B13	Record available for inspection of all calves weaned before six months and reasons provided.

Appendix 2:

Signs of insensibility

Both penetrative captive bolts and firearms need to be positioned correctly to be effective in inducing insensibility. For the optimum position for euthanasia using a free-bullet and captive bolt see the relevant section in the [Code of Welfare – Sheep and Beef Cattle 2018](#) or the [DairyNZ Humane Slaughter Guidance](#).

The operator needs to confirm the animal has been rendered insensible before bleeding out or pithing occurs to ensure the animal remains insensible until death.

The signs of insensibility include:

- immediate animal collapse;
- a lack of normal, rhythmic breathing or vocalisation;
- 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.

Appendix 3:

Relevant health and husbandry knowledge and competencies when caring for beef cattle

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 includes:

- having knowledge of cattle behaviour;
- recognising normal and abnormal behaviour, including fear and distress;
- 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 knowing how to manage them appropriately or when to euthanise;
- being competent in performing euthanasia where required, including appropriately applying the method (e.g. placement, calibre used), ensuring its effectiveness in causing immediate insensibility, ensuring the animal does not recover, and killing the animal;
- understanding low-stress handling techniques, including the use of appropriate facilities and equipment for moving calves and cattle;
- 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.



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