

Humane killing and disposal of sick or injured cattle

Humane killing should be considered for any animal that is found to be in pain or suffering and where treatment is either not practical or not economically feasible. Every farm should have access to personnel who are competent and readily available to undertake humane killing. Suitable equipment should be readily on hand and be maintained in good working condition.

Where it is necessary to kill cattle, it must be done promptly, safely and humanely.

You must ensure:

- ☒ it is done without undue delay
- ☒ the method used results in immediate loss of consciousness followed by death while unconscious
- ☒ death has occurred in every animal every time by observing for the presence of specific signs (as illustrated).

Recommended methods of killing

Adult cattle

- › Options include close range firearms to the brain, captive bolt to the brain or chemical euthanasia.
- › A rifle should deliver at least the muzzle energy of a standard 0.22 magnum cartridge. For larger animals and bulls, 0.30-calibre high-power cartridges are recommended.
- › A captive bolt is a stunning device that does not discharge a free projectile and needs to be held against the head—it is potentially safer to use than a firearm.
- › Chemical euthanasia must only be carried out under direct veterinary

supervision. The carcass of a chemically euthanised animal is not fit for consumption by any species—it must be buried, burnt or composted.

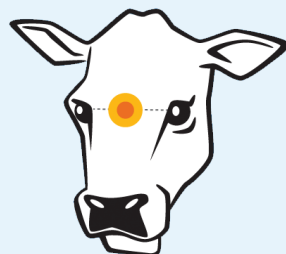
Calves

- › Options include firearms, captive bolt or chemical euthanasia.
- › A rifle should deliver at least the muzzle energy of a standard 0.22-long rifle cartridge.
- › A person must not use blunt trauma to the brain to kill a calf unless it is less than 24 hours old and no other humane killing methods are reasonably available.

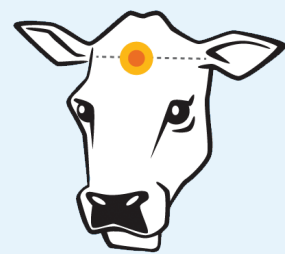
Target position for humane killing with firearm or captive bolt

Note the target for the frontal shot with a captive bolt or firearm. The direction of aim should be at a point

midway between an imaginary line connecting the base of the ears. Don't shoot between the eyes.



X Don't shoot between the eyes!



✓ Shoot between the ears!

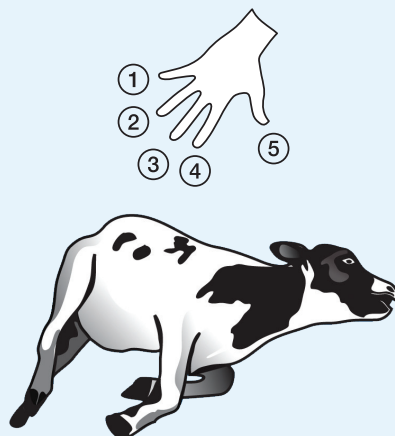
**Take great care with firearms and captive bolts.
Keep this equipment securely locked away from children.**



Signs of death

The following five head signs (the five finger head check) should be observed to determine whether the method used for humane killing has been effective in causing death. These are:

1. Absence of corneal 'blink' reflex when the eyeball is touched
2. Dilated pupils that are unresponsive to light
3. Flaccid jaw
4. Flaccid tongue
5. Absence of rhythmic respiratory movements for at least five minutes



Repeat the shot or blow if you are not confident that death has occurred. Aim between the ears again but use a different entry or striking point.

Further information

Humane killing

Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Land Transport of Cattle (including standards for humane destruction)

www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2011/02/Land-transport-of-livestock-Standards-and-Guidelines-Version-1.-1-21-September-2012.pdf

National Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals Cattle (applying directly to ACT, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia)

Carcass disposal

Victorian DPI fact sheet – On-Farm Composting of Dairy Cattle Mortalities

Dairy Australia in association with Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) and Natural Heritage Trust fact sheet – Composting carcasses on farm

Victorian DPI Agriculture Note AG1185 – Off Farm Disposal of Cattle – Tagging and Other Legal Requirements

Purchase of captive bolts

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Membership Hotline on Freecall

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Carcass disposal

It is very important that any cattle carcasses be disposed of appropriately.

- › The law prohibits leaving carcasses to rot or dumping them in waterways.
- › It is illegal in most states to allow anyone other than a licensed knackery to remove meat from a farm.

Disposal method	Note
Composting	A safe, effective and environmentally friendly method well suited to dairy farms: › No holes need to be dug › End product is useful soil conditioner applicable to pasture and crop land. › Waste hay, silage, calf pen litter and solid dairy effluent are suitable composting materials
Burning	› Used in the case of emergency diseases to destroy pathogens. › Significant air pollution is created. › Sufficient fuel is required for adequate burning—tyres are not permitted.
Burial	› Must not impact on the land, ground or surface waters or the air. › Carcasses must be buried deeply enough to prevent access by other livestock and scavengers. › Access information from state environmental protection agencies regarding depth of hole, distance from water, exclusion of stock and scavengers.
Knackery	› Collection sites should be confined to the farm and managed to minimise the potential for disease spread. › Not suitable for chemically euthanised carcasses. › Avoid communal collection sites in public areas.

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