



Date Drafted: _____

Date Revised: _____

DOWNER ACTION PLAN

Dairy Facility Name

Person(s) authorized to approve
either downer care or euthanasia : _____

Person(s) trained and
authorized to move downers: _____

Herd Veterinarian name & phone: _____

All downer cows will be treated as a medical emergency, as every hour that a downer cow remains on concrete reduces her chances of recovery. The person(s) listed above are authorized to make the decision to either move the cow to a safe, soft location or perform immediate euthanasia as needed. They are also trained in the use of the equipment necessary to move the down cow. The list below outlines methods used to move calves and cows, where on the dairy nursing care will be performed and the physical therapy method to be used to minimize muscle and nerve damage to the down limb. A downer cow care checklist is included on the back page.

Animal Age	Method of Movement *	Location on Farm For Care (see back)	Physical Therapy Method [§]
Calves (up to weaning age)			
Young-stock & Adults			

* Methods to move calves include a wheel barrel, cart, ATV and simply carrying or walking the animals. It is never appropriate to drag calves by the ears or tail.

Methods to move adult cattle include a sled, stone boat, cow sling and gently rolling her into the bucket of a front end loader. It is never appropriate to drag or push cattle with the exception of moving her a short distance out of an inaccessible space such a free-stall or milking stanchion.

§ Methods which can be used to minimize muscle and nerve damage in the down legs include hip-lifts, cow slings, float tanks and rolling the cow from side to side every several hours.

CHECKLIST FOR DOWNER COW CARE ON THIS FARM

DOWNER COWS ARE MEDICAL EMERGENCIES!

Every hour that a downer cow remains on concrete reduces her chances of recovery. In addition, good nursing care has been shown to increase the percentage of cows recovering. Using the checklist below will maximize the number of cows returning to the milking herd.

- Management is to be notified immediately when any employee becomes aware that a cow cannot rise or walk without assistance.
- The authorized person(s) on the front of this sheet will make the judgment to either immediately move the cow to a soft, safe and sheltered location or immediately perform euthanasia.
- If the decision is made to euthanize the animal, the euthanasia protocol will be followed. Only employees listed in the euthanasia protocol as trained will perform euthanasia.
- If the decision is made to treat the cow, she will be immediately moved to the farm's downer treatment area using the methods and employees listed on the front of this sheet.
- The downer treatment area will be separated from other cattle, deeply bedded and have shelter from predators and the elements, particularly the sun. (The best bedding for downers is six inches of sand.)
- In consultation with the herd manager or the herd veterinarian, medical treatment for the condition which caused the animal to go down (such as calving paralysis or milk fever) will be initiated.
- The person or persons responsible for the cows nursing care will be designated. Nursing care is to include:
 - Ongoing medical treatment for the original condition (see above).
 - Physical therapy listed on the front of this sheet is performed to minimize further muscle and nerve damage.
 - Availability of feed.
 - Free choice water (see picture of optimal watering method below).

