



ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Cattle

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The well-being of animals matters mostly to animals, of course. But that issue is also of vital importance to many consumers — and the beef and dairy industries as well. This publication, part of a series, seeks to provide basic information for non-experts.

If you are concerned about an animal's well-being

- Call a local animal control officer
- For livestock and poultry concerns, contact the Indiana State Board of Animal Health (BOAH)
<http://www.in.gov/boah/>

What is Cattle Well-Being?

Well-being is more than simply being healthy. For cattle, well-being includes:

- Feelings or emotions, such as contentment.
- Being able to behave naturally, such as grooming, stretching and turning around fully.
- Being healthy; having no injuries or disease.

Signs of poor well-being

Cattle that are sick or in pain display some of these behaviors or signs:

- Inactivity
- Cattle that are hungry or in pain may bellow loudly
- Reduced social interactions
- Reduced feeding and drinking
- Increased huddling, shivering, sleeping or resting
- Reduced grooming behavior
- Dull, dirty coat
- Open-mouth breathing or panting
- Inability to get up from a lying position
- Discharge from the eyes, nose or other areas
- Drooping ears
- Swollen, red, or discolored udder

Causes of Poor Well-Being

Cattle are not in control of their environment. They are dependent on actions taken — or not taken — by their caretakers. Here are some ways that humans can negatively affect cattle.

Neglect: Failing to care for cattle. Not providing adequate food or water. Restraining the animal in a way that causes pain or endangers health. Ignoring illness, injury or disease, and not providing veterinary care.

Cruelty or abuse: Causing physical harm and/or pain to the animal, such as prolonged periods of thirst, hunger, or restraint and immobility.

Abandonment: Deserting cattle without providing means for long-term care.

Crowding: Not providing sufficient room, especially room to stretch and turn around fully.

What cattle do, need, like, etc.

Resting: Cattle spend a large proportion of the day lying down and ruminating (chewing their cud.) Cattle have one stomach with four chambers (rumen, reticulum, omasum and abomasum.

Grooming: Cattle will self-groom to keep their coat in good condition, which reduces disease and parasites.

Birthing: Females (cows) produce milk only after giving birth to a calf. Calves need colostrum after birth. Calves need to suck on real or artificial teats.

More, please! Some animals may need supplemental feed — pregnant animals, animals that are producing milk, animals that are growing, and cold or stressed animals.

The menu: Cattle need constant access to fresh, clean, unfrozen water, and appropriate feed. (Do not give cattle moldy feed.) Consult a nutritionist for proper feed practices.

Living conditions: Housing or shelter should have adequate ventilation, dry bedding and floors with good traction. Check animals daily for diseases, parasites and injuries

Behaviors of Concern

Not all cattle behavior is good. Here are some examples.

Bulling: It's when cattle repeatedly mount other cattle, causing injuries. Providing more space may reduce bulling, but the causes of bulling are unclear.

Aggression: It's a normal behavior, but it can cause injury and can become worse under some situations. The best solution is to give cattle enough space, feed and water.

Repetitive tongue rolling: Sometimes it occurs when cattle want to feed. It may be a sign that the rumen is not as healthy as it should be. Provide adequate forage, feed and space.

Cross sucking: It's when calves suck on one another. Provide artificial teats for calves to suck on.

Proper handling practices

- When moving cattle, use the flight zone and point of balance.
- The use of electric prods is not recommended.
- Do not move cattle by pulling or twisting ears, tails or any other part.