



## 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.