

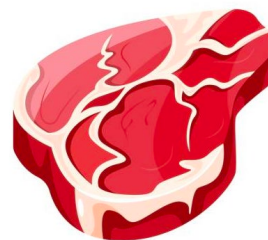
Vol. 38 No. 359

February, 2024

As I write this, looking out the window, I'm wondering if it's still winter or has spring just arrived extra-early. Since I'm no groundhog, I'll stick to talking about cows. In this month's newsletter I'll share some updates from a recent regional vet meeting about current research from OVC as well as the upcoming rollout of the Dairy Cattle Code of Practice.

Finishing Feeding Cull Dairy Cattle

A recent, soon-to-be published study compared meat quality and carcass weights for cull dairy cows in two groups: (A) a group shipped directly to slaughter and (B) a group that was dried off, kept for 60 days, and fed dairy ration TMR. Significant increases in carcass weight and marbling scores were found for the finish-fed cattle and with current meat prices their economic analysis showed a decent return on investment. Having appropriate housing space, adequate feed (potential use for weigh-backs?) and picking appropriate/healthy cull cow candidates for this type of system would be important factors.



Dairy Cattle Code of Practice

The new Dairy Cattle Code of Practice has been published for almost a year now and as we approach the upcoming implementation date it's a good time to review how it might impact your operations.



The new code will be implemented on April 1, 2024, and the expectation is that producers will at minimum follow the Requirements laid out in the Code and hopefully use the Recommended Practices sections to inform their on-farm protocols. The pro-Action Technical Committees will be meeting in 2024 to determine how and when the code's requirements and recommendations will be included in pro-Action and the prediction is that those changes will roll out in Sept 2025.

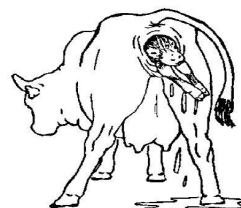
I encourage you to read the Code that was mailed out to all producers or ask your veterinarian about specific Recommended Practices sections. Going beyond the minimum requirements can result in benefits in terms of production, health, and welfare outcomes on your farm. However, to answer the question "What do I absolutely have to know right now?", the following is a summary of the new or modified Requirements set out in the Code of Practice.

Calving Area

Newly built barns must allow cows to calve in loose housed pens, yards, or pastures and have the freedom to turn around.

Future Requirements:

April 1, 2029 - The above rule will then apply to all existing barns/facilities as well.



Calf Weaning

Calves must be gradually weaned, reducing milk volumes over a period of at least 5 days, and they must be at least 8 weeks old before weaning is completed.

Calf Housing

If housed indoors, calves cannot be tethered.

If housed outdoors in hutches, the following rules apply:

- the tether must include a collar. ie. not just twine/rope tied around neck.
- the calf must be able to access an area outside the hutch.
- the calf must have physical contact with another calf.
- there are exceptions for isolating calves if sick or inclement weather.



Currently, as written it is unclear whether hutches situated within a building qualify as indoors or outdoors and clarification has been requested of the pro-Action committees as they develop their requirements.

Additionally, producers who currently house calves individually (indoors or outdoors) must develop a plan to transition to pair/group housing. The plan will need to be implemented by April 1, 2031 (see below).

Future Requirements:

April 1, 2031 - Calves that are healthy, thriving, and compatible must be housed in pairs or groups by 4 weeks of age.

Exceptions are granted when a calf requires isolation for treatment reasons or if there are no other age/size appropriate calves for the pairing.

Cow Housing

Newly built barns must allow daily untethered freedom of movement and social interactions year-round. This means new tie-stall barn designs would need to incorporate a pen, yard, or pasture for daily let-out. Existing tie-stall barns that undergo extensions/renovations are not considered a "newly built barn".

Stocking density in free-stall systems cannot exceed 1.2 cows per stall, and for group pens the minimum area is 100 ft² per Holstein cow, with adjustments for smaller breeds. Note: this is a minimum and many barn designs would choose to provide more than this minimum space (eg. 150 ft² in calving pens).

Electrified crowd gates are prohibited, as are stanchion tie-stall systems.

Future Requirements:

April 1, 2027 - Cows cannot be tethered continuously throughout their entire production cycle. If dry cows are housed in a group pen during their dry period, then this satisfies this requirement. Stocking density in free-stall systems needs to regularly be 1.1 cows per stall or less.

April 2, 2031 - Stocking density in free-stall systems needs to regularly be 1 cow per stall or less.

Health Practices

Pain control will be required for the following procedures:

- Castration (performed as early as possible)
- Extra teat removal (performed as early as possible)
- Dehorning (must be performed by 2 months of age)
- Tail docking (limited to medically necessary only)
- Invasive hoof trim
- Severe acute clinical mastitis (Abnormal milk + systemic illness)



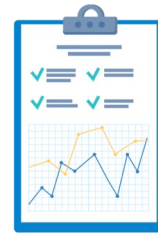
Cattle must not be branded.

If mortality in female calves older than 2 days of age is above 10% then corrective actions must be implemented to improve calving management and calf health in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified advisor.

Hip lifters may only be used to lift an animal briefly to assist a cow to become standing. They must not be used to move an animal. If you currently use hip-lifters for moving down-cows, our Heartland veterinarians are happy to discuss alternative methods and develop a plan with you.

Electric prods can only be applied to the rear flank/upper rear leg of down cows (twice maximum) and only when absolutely necessary to determine if an animal can rise or if euthanasia is required.

Records of treatments, mortalities, and disease events (already a pro-Action requirement) will now need to be kept for at least 3 years to track trends in animal health.



Changes To Our In-Clinic Antibiotic Residue Testing for Milk

Dear clients, traditionally we have had two different tests available for antibiotic residue testing in milk to make sure it is safe and salable. We have the “Charm trio” at our Listowel location and the “Delvo” at our Mount Forest and Drayton locations. The Charm trio is the most sensitive test and is also what the milk processors are currently using. The Delvo, however, cannot consistently detect antibiotic residue levels that are still above the upper residue limits established by the CFIA. Because of the potential risk of getting a false negative result and to adhere to milk quality standards used at the processing plants, our practice has decided to discontinue the in-clinic use of the Delvo. This would mean all milk samples requiring testing would need to be brought to our Listowel location for testing with the Charm. We will continue to order Delvo test products for clients with their own Delvo kits. If you have any questions, please reach out to one of our veterinarians.

Up Coming Changes to After Hours Service

Our Large Animal and Equine After Hours Service provider will be changing to Smart Vet in the next month. Please be aware that with this change, the prompts will be different than they are now, so listen carefully so you are directed correctly. If you have any questions or concerns during this transition, please let us know.

Upcoming Stat Holidays

The clinic will be closed for Family Day Monday February 19, 2024, re-opening Tuesday February 20, 2024. As always, veterinarians will be available 24-7 for emergency service. The Saturday fee schedule will remain unchanged from non-stat weekends.



You're invited to
HEARTLAND VETERINARY SERVICES
DAIRY DAY

March 6th, 2024

Listowel Ag Hall

Doors open at 10:00am

Sessions start at 10:20

Speakers include:

Dr. Chris Church, DVM – *Dairy Farming is a Team Sport: Who do you have on the Field? and Production & Profitability on Dairy Farms: How do they Connect?*

Andrea Degroot, FCC – *Pathways to Transition*

DFO Representative – *DFO Update*



Please RSVP by Mar 1, by calling 519-291-2060 or email LA@heartlandvets.ca

Coffee, Donuts, and Lunch provided.