This Down Cow SOP Example is a resource for farms that may implement Down Cow Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for their operations. The materials contained in this Example are intended to provide farms with guidance as the farms establish their own Down Cow SOP, and are not intended to be the final SOP for any specific farm. Each farm facility is different and “off-the-shelf policies” that have not been tailored to the particular facility are not considered to be compliant.
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This example was developed with the assistance of Kurt Vogel, Assistant Professor Animal and Food Science, University of Wisconsin-River Falls. Modifications made to this example are at the discretion and sole responsibility of the owner/herdsman and/or veterinarian making the changes. Adopting this example without modification for the specific farm and facility is not appropriate.

NOTE: If you would like an editable version, please contact Professional Services at 866.986.9404.
Enter Farm Name Here

Down Cow Team

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Standards of Care

Team members have been chosen for their commitment, intelligence and compassion. They have been selected because they are the elite of employees. Therefore, they are expected to lead by example and, as such, behave in a professional and compassionate manner when dealing with animals placed under their care. These cows are living creatures that provide all of those associated with the farm their livelihoods and, as such, will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

The following rules will be followed at all times when moving down cows.

- All employees not affiliated with the Down Cow Team will be made to leave the immediate area.
- Members of the Down Cow Team will not verbally insult or cuss at the cow.
- Members of the Down Cow Team will not strike the down cow with any object.
- Members of the Down Cow Team will not drag the down cow by the head or any limb with heavy equipment except in circumstances specifically outlined in **Down Cow Team SOP #7 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Out of the Loading Lane for the Hoof Chute**, with the consent of the owner.
- Members of the Down Cow Team will treat the cow with dignity and respect at all times.
- Members of the Down Cow Team will acknowledge that the reason for this team is to safely and humanely move the down cow to an area where she can be given the proper care to facilitate her return to production.

The following Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are to guide the Down Cow Team in their handling of animals in various circumstances.
**Down Cow SOP**

This protocol was developed for Enter Farm Name Here by Enter Owner Name Here, Owner of Enter Farm Name Here and Enter Herd Veterinarian Name Here, Veterinarian of Enter Veterinary Practice Name Here.

In today’s modern dairy facilities, there will occasionally be a down cow that will not be able to rise and walk. Many reasons can cause a cow to go down ranging from disease and injury, to a simple slip on the concrete.

A team approach is best in aiding a down cow. The team will be comprised of at least four individuals for each shift, with one of these individuals being the shift manager. One individual will have rudimentary diagnostic ability to determine the cause and the specific treatment modality required. These teams will be trained to follow specific protocols while dealing with a down cow.

When a down cow is first encountered by an employee, that employee may attempt to encourage the cow to get up.

- The employee will make sure the cow can gain adequate traction by scraping any accumulated manure out of the way and applying fresh lime to the concrete around the animal. If the cow is in a stall, these steps may not be required.
- The employee may attempt to get the cow up by applying pressure with their knees to the cow’s rump or ribs directly behind the shoulder blade. Several attempts can be made while verbally encouraging the cow to stand.
- If these attempts do not work, the employee may then slap the cow with an open palm along her back. Employees should never strike a down cow with an object or verbally abuse the animal.
- If the cow still does not rise, the employee may, if management approves this practice, use electric stimulation in an attempt to get the cow to rise. Electric stimulation, using an approved device, may be applied to the animal’s back. Electric stimulation should never be applied to the cow’s face or genitals. Two to three attempts lasting no more than 3 seconds of application may be attempted.
- If the cow attempts to rise, the employee should position themselves at the rear of the cow to help stabilize by supporting her tail.
- If these processes fail to get the cow to rise, the employee should notify the shift manager immediately. The shift manager will mobilize the Down Cow Team and proceed to the sight of the incident.

The Down Cow Team will quickly assess the situation. A physical exam will be performed to determine the potential cause of the cow going down. The “Five M’s” of the down cow will be assessed:

1. The employee will make sure the cow can gain adequate traction by scraping any accumulated manure out of the way and applying fresh lime to the concrete around the animal. If the cow is in a stall, these steps may not be required.
2. The employee may attempt to get the cow up by applying pressure with their knees to the cow’s rump or ribs directly behind the shoulder blade. Several attempts can be made while verbally encouraging the cow to stand.
3. If these attempts do not work, the employee may then slap the cow with an open palm along her back. Employees should never strike a down cow with an object or verbally abuse the animal.
4. If the cow still does not rise, the employee may, if management approves this practice, use electric stimulation in an attempt to get the cow to rise. Electric stimulation, using an approved device, may be applied to the animal’s back. Electric stimulation should never be applied to the cow’s face or genitals. Two to three attempts lasting no more than 3 seconds of application may be attempted.
5. If the cow attempts to rise, the employee should position themselves at the rear of the cow to help stabilize by supporting her tail.
6. If these processes fail to get the cow to rise, the employee should notify the shift manager immediately. The shift manager will mobilize the Down Cow Team and proceed to the sight of the incident.

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Metabolic – Is the cow recently fresh? If so, she is a prime candidate for a fresh cow metabolic disorder that could have caused her to go down.

- **Milk Fever** – A state of low blood calcium causing a cow to become weak and recumbent.
  - **Clinical Signs** – Cow is sternal or laterally recumbent. Droopy cold ears, skin may be cool to the touch and may hold her head with an S shaped kink in her neck when viewed from the rear of the animal.
  - **Treatment** – Initiate treatment established with your herd veterinarian. The cow will usually respond to treatment and get up within five minutes. If the cow fails to rise and is in a position that endangers her, other cows or employees, she should be moved (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).

  **NOTE:** Examples of situations where a cow could go down and endanger herself or other cows would be the parlor or return alley. Other cows may not be able to get past the down cow and attempt to jump over her. The down cow or the other cows can be injured if this occurs. Situations where a cow could go down and endanger employees would be in the return alley. The constricted space would put an employee attempting to diagnose or treat her in danger.

- **Hypophosphatemia** – A state of low blood levels of phosphorous that can cause a cow to become weak or recumbent. This can occur simultaneously with milk fever.
  - **Clinical Signs** – Cow is sternal or laterally recumbent. If concurrent with Milk Fever, will display similar clinical signs. After treatment for milk fever, these cows usually will look bright and alert and try to get up. They will be able to get about ¾ of the way up on the back end, but fail to completely rise; returning to a sternal position.
  - **Treatment** – Initiate treatment established with your herd veterinarian. Cows do not absorb phosphorous as quickly as calcium, so it may take several hours before she is able to rise on her own. If the cow is in a position that endangers her, other cows or employees, she should be moved (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).

- **Ketosis** – This is a negative energy state more common in fresh cows, but can be seen at different stages of lactation. A severe state of ketosis can cause a cow to go down.
  - **Clinical Signs** – Cows down from ketosis will appear depressed. Sometimes, they can exhibit signs of “nervous ketosis”*. These cows will exhibit neurologic signs such as aggressive behavior, transient blindness and excessive licking. A urine sample can be quickly checked using a Ketostix to check levels of ketosis.
  - **Treatment** – Initiate treatment established with your herd veterinarian. These cows may respond rather quickly and get up and move of their own accord. If she does not get up soon after treatment, and is in a position that endangers her, other cows or employees, she should be moved (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).
Metritis – Is the cow recently fresh? Fresh cows can develop a uterine infection post calving that can progress to a severity that will cause a cow to become recumbent.

- **Clinical Signs** – Cows down from severe metritis will have a high temperature and appear depressed and lethargic. They are usually dehydrated and exhibiting signs of toxic shock. They may exhibit an odorous mucopurulent discharge or if her cervix is closed, her uterus will feel large and fluid filled upon rectal palpation.
- **Treatment** – Cows down from severe metritis will need antibiotic therapy and supportive therapy. These treatment protocols should be established with your herd veterinarian. These cows do not usually get up right away. If the cow is in a position that endangers her, other cows, or employees, she should be moved (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).

Mastitis – Cows at any stage of lactation may contract a bacterial mastitis that can progress to her becoming recumbent.

- **Clinical Signs** – Cows down from a severe mastitis may have a high temperature and appear depressed or lethargic. They are usually dehydrated and exhibiting signs of toxic shock. Examination of the udder will reveal a swollen, distended quarter and abnormal milk, usually watery.
- **Treatment** – Cows down from severe mastitis should be treated following the mastitis protocol. This treatment protocol should be established with your herd veterinarian. These cows usually do not get up immediately after treatment. If the cow is in a position that endangers her, other cows, or employees, she should be moved (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).

Massive Peritonitis – Cows at any stage of lactation may develop an infection in their peritoneal cavity. This is usually associated with uterine trauma following a difficult calving or post abdominal surgery, but can also occur at any time due to a perforated gastric ulcer or case of hardware.

- **Clinical Signs** – Cows down from massive peritonitis will have an elevated temperature and appear depressed and lethargic. They will be dehydrated. Rectal examination will reveal scant manure and the rectal wall will feel “shrink wrapped” around your hand due to the accumulation of gas in the abdominal cavity.
- **Treatment** – Cows down due to massive peritonitis do not usually respond to treatment. Initiation of treatment should be determined by the herdsman or a veterinarian based upon chances of success and animal distress. It may be in the best interest of the cow to humanely euthanize the animal. If this option is chosen, depending on her location, she may be euthanized in place or may have to be moved to another location (see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP and Humane Euthanasia SOP).
**Musculoskeletal Injury** – Cows can go down due to musculoskeletal injury. There are many different causes of these: a cow does the splits on the concrete, a cow is in heat and is jumped by another cow causing an injury, etc. The cow should be assessed for all scenarios, as some may be treated over time and others are incurable. In all cases, cows affected by musculoskeletal injuries do not normally rise of their own accord. These animals, depending on the type of injury and the cow’s location, should either be humanely euthanized in place or moved to a better location for euthanasia or treatment. *(see Humane Euthanasia SOP and Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).*

Sometimes, a sixth M of the down cow can occur.

**My Gosh, How Did She Get Herself into This Predicament** – Modern dairies are designed and built to both increase cow comfort, as well as make sanitation and cleanliness easier endeavors. This means that there is usually a lot of steel and concrete on a modern dairy. Sometimes, dairy cows think they are smaller than they really are. In the process, they get themselves stuck and can injure themselves. In instances where the management of the farm decides that it is safe for both the employees and the cow to attempt to extricate the cow, the health and wellbeing of the cow should always be the priority *(see Moving a Recumbent Cow SOP).* In some extreme, unanticipated instances, where attempting to extricate the cow jeopardizes the safety of employees and the cow, humane euthanasia may be appropriate *(see Humane Euthanasia SOP).*
Down Cow Team SOP #1 – Proper Use of a Hip Hoist

1. Use of a hip hoist will be decided by the shift manager in charge of the Down Cow Team.
2. A halter will be placed on the cow’s head so that she can be controlled.
3. The hip hoist will be placed over the hip/pin bones of the down cow.
4. The hip hoist will be tightened to a point that when pressure is applied the cow will not slip free.
5. A skid loader will be positioned as close as possible to the rear of the cow with the bucket elevated to maximum height to avoid injuring the cow or an employee so that the bucket is directly over the hip hoist.
6. The bucket will be lowered to a point that allows the hip hoist to be attached to it and leave a gap of 2-3 feet / 0.6-0.9 m between the bucket and the back of the cow.
7. The skid loader will raise the bucket to a point where the cow can stand straight legged and no higher.
8. The cow may place her feet and begin bearing some of her own weight. If the cow is bearing some of her own weight, the hip hoist and skid loader may remain to help stabilize her for no longer than 10 minutes.
9. If the cow does not place her feet and begin to bear any of her own weight, she may hang in this position for no more than 5 minutes before she must be lowered back to the ground.

Note:

- Under No Circumstances should the cow ever be completely suspended in the air by the hip hoist!
- Under No Circumstances should the cow ever be moved from one area of the farm to another by means of the hip hoist!
Down Cow Team SOP #2 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Using a Sled

1. A sled will be placed on her backside (opposite her feet) as close to her body as possible. Whenever possible, the sled should be positioned so the cow will be moved headfirst.

2. The cow will be adequately restrained to prevent injury to the employees and the cow. A halter will be placed on her head allowing her head to be tied to her back leg. Her two front feet should be tied together and her two back feet should be tied together. This is to prevent her from kicking out and injuring an employee. If necessary, and safe for the cow, chemical sedation/restraint can be administered. A protocol for this should be established with your herd veterinarian.

3. Once properly restrained, the cow should be rolled on her side onto the sled.

4. The cow, while on the sled, will be dragged to the desired location by heavy equipment.

5. The driver of the heavy equipment will drive at a speed that ensures the safety of both the employees and the cow. The equipment should drive no faster than a person can walk. Two members of the Down Cow Team should walk along side of the sled to make sure the cow does not slide off.

6. Once the team has arrived at the desired location, the cow will be rolled back to her belly and off the sled.

7. The restraints on her feet will be removed.

8. The cow’s head will be untied from her back leg and the halter removed.
Down Cow Team SOP #3 – Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means of Mechanical Conveyance

1. The cow will be adequately restrained to prevent injury to the employees and the cow. A halter will be placed on her head allowing her head to be tied to her back leg. Her two front feet should be tied together and her two back feet should be tied together. This is to prevent her from kicking out and injuring an employee. If necessary, and safe for the cow, chemical sedation/restraint can be administered. A protocol for this should be established with your herd veterinarian.

2. A skid loader with a bucket of at least 6 feet / 1.8 meters wide and the cutting blade removed will be positioned as close as possible behind the cow. The bucket will be placed flush with the floor. Adequate bedding or rubber mats will be placed in the bucket to provide cushioning in order to protect the cow.

3. The cow will be manually rolled into the bucket. The bucket will NEVER be used to scoop the cow.

4. Once the cow is placed into the bucket, the bucket will be rotated vertically to ensure the cow cannot roll out. The bucket will also be elevated vertically to a height of no more than 3 feet / 0.9 meters to ensure proper ground clearance while still enabling the driver to see.

5. The driver of the heavy equipment will drive at a speed that ensures the safety of both the employees and the cow. The heavy equipment will not drive faster than a person can walk.

6. Once the team has arrived at the desired location, the bucket will be lowered and rotated so that it is flush with the ground. The Down Cow Team will monitor to make sure no part of the cow is entrapped between the bucket and the floor.

7. The cow will be manually rolled back to her belly and out of the bucket. The cow will NEVER be rolled out of the bucket by use of the mechanical controls of the bucket.

8. The restraints on her feet will be removed.

9. The cow’s head will be untied from her back leg and the halter removed.

Note: An alternative to a bucket would be a V trough mounted to a skid loader. The V trough should have rubber padding mounted to it to adequately cushion the cow and help to prevent any further injury. Canvas bands at least 6 inches / 15 cm wide can be placed across the cow’s belly and secured in order to keep the cow in place. The cow’s legs should be restrained as well to prevent her from kicking and injuring herself or an employee.
Down Cow Team SOP #4 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Out of the Parlor

Note: This is an example of an SOP written for a specific parlor. Farm specific SOPs need to be tailored to the specific requirements of individual parlors. This SOP also demonstrates the need for users of this Example to appropriately revise all SOPs prior to adoption.

1. (Insert Name of Dairy) Dairy’s main parlor is a parallel 35. It has indexing gates that lift out of the way as the cows are released. The deck on the East side is 15 feet wide and the deck on the West side is 10 feet wide. There are gates from the holding area that allow a skid loader access to the decks.

2. If the cow goes down while in the actual parlor, members of the Down Cow Team will manually move the cow into a position on the deck where she can be moved by means of mechanical conveyance (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means of Mechanical Conveyance).

3. The cow will be adequately restrained to prevent injury to the employees and the cow. A halter will be placed on her head allowing her head to be tied to her back leg. Her two front feet should be tied together and her two back feet should be tied together. This is to prevent her from kicking out and injuring an employee. If necessary, and safe for the cow, chemical sedation/restraint can be administered. A protocol for this should be established with your herd veterinarian.

4. A skid loader with a bucket of at least 6 feet / 1.8 meters wide and the cutting blade removed will be positioned as close as possible behind the cow. The bucket will be placed flush with the floor. Adequate bedding or rubber mats will be placed in the bucket to provide cushioning in order to protect the cow.

5. The cow will be manually rolled into the bucket. The bucket will NEVER be used to scoop the cow.

6. Once the cow is placed into the bucket, the bucket will be rotated vertically to ensure the cow cannot roll out. The bucket will also be elevated vertically to a height of no more than 3 feet / 0.9 meters to ensure proper ground clearance while still enabling the driver to see.

7. The driver of the heavy equipment will drive at a speed that ensures the safety of both the employees and the cow. The heavy equipment will not drive faster than a person can walk.

8. Once the team has arrived at the desired location, the bucket will be lowered and rotated so that it is flush with the ground. The Down Cow team will monitor to make sure no part of the cow is entrapped between the bucket and the floor.

9. The cow will be manually rolled back to her belly and out of the bucket. The cow will NEVER be rolled out of the bucket by use of the mechanical controls of the bucket.

10. The restraints on her feet will be removed.

11. The cow’s head will be untied from her back leg and the halter removed.
Down Cow Team SOP #5 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Out of the Return Alley

Note: This is an example of an SOP written for a specific return alley. Farm specific SOPs need to be tailored to the specific requirements of individual return alleys. This SOP also demonstrates the need for users of this Example to appropriately revise all SOPs prior to adoption.

1. (Insert Dairy Name) Dairy’s return alley from the main parlor is 10 feet wide with 4 foot high concrete walls on either side. At the end of the return alley, there is a gate that funnels cows into a sorting gate. The sorting gate lane is 3 feet wide and separated from the main return alley by metal fencing. The gap between the bottom rung of fencing and the floor is less than 3 feet. It is recommended that (Insert Dairy Name) Dairy adjust this fencing so that the bottom rung can be removed. That way, if a cow goes down in the sort gate lane, the bottom rung of fencing can be removed and the cow can be manually maneuvered under the fence and into the main return alley.

2. If a cow goes down in the Main Return Alley, she will be moved by means of mechanical conveyance (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means of Mechanical Conveyance).

3. The cow will be adequately restrained to prevent injury to the employees and the cow. A halter will be placed on her head allowing her head to be tied to her back leg. Her two front feet should be tied together and her two back feet should be tied together. This is to prevent her from kicking out and injuring an employee. If necessary, and safe for the cow, chemical sedation/restraint can be administered. A protocol for this should be established with your herd veterinarian.

4. A skid loader with a bucket of at least 6 feet / 1.8 meters wide and the cutting blade removed will be positioned as close as possible behind the cow. The bucket will be placed flush with the floor. Adequate bedding or rubber mats will be placed in the bucket to provide cushioning in order to protect the cow.

5. The cow will be manually rolled into the bucket. The bucket will NEVER be used to scoop the cow.

6. Once the cow is placed into the bucket, the bucket will be rotated vertically to ensure that the cow cannot roll out. The bucket will also be elevated vertically to a height of no more than 3 feet / 0.9 meters to ensure proper ground clearance while still enabling the driver to see.

7. The driver of the heavy equipment will drive at a speed that ensures the safety of both the employees and the cow. The heavy equipment will not drive faster than a person can walk.

8. Once the team has arrived at the desired location, the bucket will be lowered and rotated so that it is flush with the ground. The Down Cow Team will monitor to make sure no part of the cow is entrapped between the bucket and the floor.

9. The cow will be manually rolled back to her belly and out of the bucket. The cow will NEVER be rolled out of the bucket by use of the mechanical controls of the bucket.

10. The restraints on her feet and the halter will be removed.
Down Cow Team SOP #6 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Out of a Stall (Cow Facing Forward)

1. The Down Cow Team will attempt to manually remove the cow from the stall and position her so she may be moved by means of mechanical conveyance (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means Of Mechanical Conveyance). If this is not possible, the Down Cow Team has two options: they can start taking stalls apart to facilitate getting the cow out of the stall or they can attempt to lift the cow out of the stall using a sling. A hip hoist can be used to help place the sling.
2. Use of a hip hoist to help place a sling will be decided by the shift manager in charge of the Down Cow Team.
3. A halter will be placed on the cow’s head so that she can be controlled.
4. The hip hoist will be placed over the hip/pin bones of the down cow.
5. The hip hoist will be tightened to a point that when pressure is applied the cow will not slip free.
6. A skid loader will be positioned as close as possible to the rear of the cow so that the bucket is directly over the hip hoist. The bucket will be elevated to maximum height to avoid injuring the cow or an employee.
7. The bucket will be lowered to a point that allows the hip hoist to be attached to it and leave a gap of 2-3 feet / 0.6-0.9 meters between the bucket and the back of the cow.
8. The skid loader will elevate the cow 2-3 feet / 0.6-0.9 meters in order to allow enough clearance for the Down Cow Team to pass a sling under the cow’s belly.
9. The sling will be positioned correctly to equally support the cow’s entire weight when elevated.
10. The skid loader will lower the cow back to the bed of the stall.
11. The hip hoist will be disconnected from the skid loader.
12. The skid loader will move forward so the bucket is located directly above the attachment point of the sling.
13. The bucket will be lowered so the sling may be attached to the bucket leaving at least a 2 foot / 0.6 meters gap between the back of the cow and the bottom of the bucket.
14. The skid loader will slowly raise the cow from the bed of the stall until the cow is in an upright position. The team will wait for several seconds to see if the cow attempts to stand on her own.
15. If the cow does not attempt to stand, the skid loader will slowly back up with the cow suspended from the bucket by the sling. The cow’s feet should be no more than 6 inches / 15 cm off the ground. The Down Cow Team will attempt to prevent the cow from injuring herself on the dividers while they keep their own safety in mind.
16. Once the cow is clear of the stall, the skid loader will turn and gently lower the cow onto the cow sled (see Moving a Recumbent Cow Using a Sled) or she will be lowered to the ground and placed in the bucket (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means of Mechanical Conveyance).
Down Cow Team SOP #7 – Moving a Recumbent Cow Out of the Loading Lane for the Hoof Chute

Note: This is an example of an SOP written for a specific location. Farm specific SOPs need to be tailored to the specific requirements of individual farms. This SOP also demonstrates the need for users of this Example to appropriately revise all SOPs prior to adoption.

1. (Insert Dairy Name) Dairy has a dedicated hoof trimming area. There is a loading lane leading from a holding area to the hoof trimming chute. This loading lane is about 30 feet long and 3 feet wide with 4 foot concrete walls on each side. If a cow becomes recumbent in the loading lane, and is unable to rise, the only way to remove her from the loading lane, without endangering employees, is to pull her by her front legs. This is the ONLY instance at (Insert Dairy Name) Dairy where a down cow will be moved in this fashion.

2. If a cow goes down in the loading lane, the Down Cow Team will make any cows behind the down cow back up into the holding area.

3. It is highly recommended that chemical sedation/restraint be administered. A protocol for this should be established with your herd veterinarian. The Down Cow Team leader should approach the down cow from behind and administer the sedation.

4. While the Down Cow Team is waiting for the chemical sedation to have an effect, the hoof trimming chute should be removed from the front of the loading lane.

5. Once the down cow is sedated, the team leader should approach the front of the cow and pull her front legs straight out in front of the cow.

Note: It is recommended that only one person enter the loading lane to maneuver the cow’s legs. If the cow attempts to get up or begins to thrash, it could be dangerous. It will be easier for one person to get out of the way in the confined space than two.

6. Canvas tow straps, 4-6 inches wide, should be attached to the cow’s legs. For example, if pulling a cow by the front legs, the tow straps will be attached to each front leg between the dew claws and the carpus (the front knee) and a second loop/half hitch between the dew claws and the hoof.

7. The tow straps will be attached to a skid loader so that they are equal length. This will ensure that the pressure exerted is equal on both legs.

8. The equipment will move slowly, taking out the slack in the tow straps and stretching out the legs.

9. Once the legs are at full extension, the heavy equipment will move slowly. The goal is to exert enough force to move the cow but under no circumstances should the equipment operator try to “jerk” the cow free.

10. The equipment will pull the cow only to a point where it is possible to transfer the cow to a bucket (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means of Mechanical Conveyance).
Down Cow Team SOP #8 – Removing a Cow from the Manure Pit with Heavy Equipment

1. **This is a VERY dangerous situation. Under no circumstances should the owners put themselves or their employees at risk.**
2. In the case of a cow getting stuck in a manure pit, the only way to attach to her would be her head. This is an emergency situation. If the cow remains in the pit for too long, she could drown.
3. Ideally, a lariat can be thrown to rope the cow’s head. The lariat should have a knot tied in it 4 feet above the hondo. This will prevent the hondo from sliding all the way down the rope and cutting off the cow’s air supply as tension is applied.
4. Once the rope is in place around the cow’s neck, the cow can be pulled from the manure pit using heavy equipment.
5. Once the cow is out of the pit, she should be assessed. A veterinarian may be required for a consultation.
6. If the cow is unlikely to survive because she has aspirated manure or has skin lacerations that are likely to become severely infected, she should be humanely euthanized (see Humane Euthanasia SOP).
7. If the cow has a good chance at survival, she should be cleaned immediately and put in a pen with clean, dry bedding and access to feed and water. A physical exam should be performed on the cow once a day for at least 3 days following the event to assess for signs of infection.
8. Assess how the cow got stuck in the manure pit and what steps can be taken to avoid a repeat incident in the future.
Down Cow Team SOP #9 – Removing a Dead Cow with Heavy Equipment

1. When a cow dies on our farm or when it is necessary to euthanize a cow, it does not remove our obligation to treat the remains with dignity and respect. The cow worked hard for us when alive, so it is our duty to treat the remains with the same respect we gave the cow during life. Therefore, the following steps will be followed by the Down Cow Team when removing a dead cow from the farm.

2. If it is necessary to move the body of a recently deceased cow, it may be pulled by heavy equipment to a point where it is possible to move the body by mechanical conveyance.

3. Canvas tow straps, 4-6 inches wide, should be attached to the legs. For example, if pulling the body by the front legs, the tow straps will be attached to each front leg between the dew claws and the carpus (the front knee).

4. The tow straps will be attached to a skid loader so that they are equal in length. This will ensure the pressure exerted is equal on both legs.

5. The equipment will move slowly, taking out the slack in the tow straps and stretching out the legs.

6. Once the legs are at full extension, the heavy equipment will move slowly. The goal is to exert enough force to move the body, but under no circumstances should the equipment operator try to “jerk” the body free.

7. The equipment will pull the body only to a point where it is possible to transfer the body to a bucket (see Moving a Recumbent Cow By Means Of Mechanical Conveyance).
Humane Euthanasia
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Reasons for Humane Euthanasia

The harsh reality of any business or individual that is responsible for the wellbeing and care of animals must face is the need for humane euthanasia. The primary reason for this is to relieve pain and suffering experienced by the animal in question. Many causes can lead to this difficult decision: failure of treatment, traumatic injury, contracting an incurable contagious disease, or the animal’s state of health precludes her from being sold for slaughter.

Methods of Humane Euthanasia

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has only approved three acceptable methods to euthanize bovines:

1. Penetrating Captive Bolt
2. Gunshot (AVMA has guidelines regarding type of firearm and size of the round. A .22 Mag rifle or pistol is approved. See below for anatomic landmarks.)
3. Euthanasia Injection (This is a barbiturate; therefore, a controlled substance that can only be administered by a veterinarian.)

For a complete description of approved methods of euthanasia for cattle, follow the attached link.

Euthanasia SOP

1. The owners or their duly appointed representative will be the only people allowed to make the decision to euthanize an animal.
2. The owners or their duly appointed representative will decide the method of euthanasia.
3. If gunshot to the head is chosen, the owners or their duly appointed representative will either perform the act themselves or appoint a third party (employee or dead stock removal) to perform the euthanasia according to AVMA guidelines.
4. A gunshot, using an approved caliber and type of firearm, will be inflicted upon the head at a certain point that will terminate brain function immediately. See anatomical landmarks below.

![Anatomical Landmarks](image)

5. If euthanasia injection is chosen, the owners or their duly appointed representative will call the veterinarian to perform the euthanasia.
6. Regardless of method chosen, cessation of a heartbeat must be observed prior to disposal of the animal’s remains.
7. Disposal of the animal’s remains shall be conducted with dignity and respect.

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