

# Making the Decision to Cull a Cow

Professional Services Veterinarian Department Technical Bulletin



## The decision to cull a cow is always difficult. Consider the following:

- Does she have difficulties with calving/reproduction?
- Is her structure (feet & legs) favorable?
- Does she have below average milk production?
- Is she temperamental?
- Does she have chronic udder/mastitis problems?
- Is she hard to milk?
- Are beef prices favorable?
- Does she have a below average body condition score (BCS)?
- Does she have long dry periods?
- Is she an older cow?



## After the above questions have been reviewed and it is determined that the cow is eligible to be culled, here is a potential process to streamline the procedure:

1. Physically separate the cow, so no other cows could be loaded by mistake.
2. Unique animal identification and physical verification will ensure the correct cow has indeed been loaded on the truck.
3. Review the records for each cow loaded, confirming all are free of drug residues.

## \*Facts and Statistics Regarding Culling Cows:

- By making culling decisions in a timely manner, you have the likelihood of increasing your profitability by \$144 per cow.
- A cow needs to be producing greater than 60 lbs of milk per day to offset a 30-day delay in making a decision to market the cow sooner.

\*U of M Extension - Laura Kieser, Extension Educator

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## Culling Cow Check-list:

Questions?	NO	YES
1. Did you verify the cows last treatment with her treatment record?		
2. Is the cow free of residues?		
a. Do you have a negative test to confirm this?		
b. Did you document results in treatment records?		
3. Is she healthy enough to withstand the trip?		
4. Is she properly identified (comply with state/federal regulations)?		
5. Is she physically separated from the rest of the herd?		
6. Did someone verify that the proper cow was loaded?		

If you answered **NO** to any of the above questions, the cow you are culling should **NOT** be shipped. Without abiding by a proper cull cow protocol check-list, your farm is at risk for substantial residue fines and cull cows shipped from the same location may incur additional scrutiny in the future.

*\*\*Note: Only allow ambulatory animals to be shipped to market.*

## How to Avoid a Positive Residue Test in Cull Cows

- Implement proper treatment protocols to ensure cows only receive products with well-established meat withdrawal times
- Adequate records are kept and monitored
  - Date of treatment
  - Dose & Route of administration
  - Duration of treatment
  - Animal ID
  - Product administered
  - Employee administering (Initials)
  - Milk/Meat withholds
  - Meat residue test results

**Free Templates of Treatment Records available at: [animart.com/dairyriskfactors](http://animart.com/dairyriskfactors)**

For more information contact:  
1.800.255.1181 | [info@animart.com](mailto:info@animart.com)

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