



## **Animal Welfare Review Dairy Audit Standards**

Validus audits are based on science, industry standards, and best management practices. The objectives of the audit program are to (1) conduct an independent, third-party verification of on-farm animal welfare practices and (2) show continual improvement of animal care practices on-farm. The auditor conducts a comprehensive walk-through of the operation including both animal and personnel observation. Personnel will be interviewed as to their daily animal care duties, responsibilities, and training. The scope of this audit includes the management, employees, and all animals at the physical location of the dairy based on the premise identification that is assigned, in the event of an animal health or food safety emergency, to the physical location for where animals are kept. All structures and facilities that house animals on the premises will be observed as part of the audit process. As the auditor moves through the dairy, the management team will be expected to provide information regarding the biosecurity or flow of the operation. Validus auditors will follow the plan identified by the producer regarding biosecurity of the operation (Example: youngest to oldest).

The audit will consist of the following:

- Entrance Interview – Review of expectations and interview with farm manager
- Document Review – Review of records, standard operating procedures
- Caretaker Observations and Interviews – Individual or group interviews to verify standard operating procedures. Employees could be interviewed and/or observed in the areas of: animal handling, processing, euthanasia, and/or transport (demonstration/describe process). Minimum of at least 1 observation/interview for each event occurring during the audit. If an issue is suspected, the auditor will expand their caretaker observations and interviews.
- Facility Observations – Observe facilities for benchmarks
- Animal Observations – Observe animals for benchmarks
- Exit Interview – Discuss observations with the manager (or management representatives) that will be included in the audit report

The number of animals to be observed will be based on a statistical sampling process to ensure that areas are evaluated thoroughly and accurately. Animals are observed in key groups that are located on the premises (pre-weaned calves, heifers, dry cows, lactating cows, hospital pens). Throughout the audit, any animal identified with an issue outside of the sample observation (i.e., any physical issue attribute that is causing a detriment to the animal's health) will be noted as an out-of-scope observation (an animal not part of the random animal observation process). The out-of-scope observations will not be calculated as part of the benchmark percentage, but all observations will be discussed at the exit interview and will be included in the audit report notes.

With the focus of this audit being on improving the welfare of the animals on the dairy, an increased emphasis has been placed on this aspect. Points on animal welfare criteria have been doubled on the audit tool, therefore placing a larger emphasis on animal welfare criteria. (Refer to Page 13 for examples)

Contractors or employees working on the dairy should be properly trained to be able to complete the task without causing distress or harm to the animals. The selected individuals should understand the dairy's animal welfare policy and have signed off on this document. If embryo transfer or in vitro fertilization occurs on the dairy, it should be completed by a veterinarian or a trained competent individual.

Dairies audited to the Validus Dairy Animal Welfare Standards must not include the use of recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST) hormones.

*As a part of the USDA TS34700 program, we are required to discuss that animal breeding, welfare and health concerns should be a part of genetic selection. Genetic selection may include selecting animals that are best suited for the region and area where the dairy is located. The dairy should review historical information on the breeding background of the cattle purchased and bred at the facility to make sure that traits are selected that are best suited for the region.*

*Examples include but are not limited to: avoiding any potential health and disease issue, calving ease, temperament, body conformation, and any other desired traits. Mixing horned and non-horned animals should not occur at the facility. Considerations by the producer need to be made regarding the age and stage of the animals so that they can be grouped together within their hierarchies. Aggressive animals (express excessive antagonistic behavior) need to be observed and managed to avoid animal and employee injury. If aggressive cattle are identified, then employees need to be trained to respond to the situations and remove animals from these pens, if needed.*

*Throughout the audit standards below the highlights designate critical failure items (red) and the changes that were made during the last revision (yellow).*

## **Validus Audit Standards**

### **Critical Failures:**

Willful acts of abuse and neglect will result in an automatic failure of the audit. The audit will continue, but Critical Failures (as highlighted in red throughout the standards) must be stopped immediately. A written corrective action plan must be submitted within 24 hours of the audit. A verification audit to evaluate areas of deficiency that were identified in the previous audit will be completed within 30-60 days of the audit date. Listed below are the critical failure standards:

- Intentionally applying prods to sensitive parts of the animal such as eyes, ears, nose, genitals, udder, or rectum.
- Malicious hitting/beating of an animal. This includes forcefully striking an animal with closed fist, foot, handling equipment (sorting board, rattle paddle, etc.) or other hard/solid objects that can cause pain, bruising or injury.
- Moving animals in a manner that causes them to fall.
- Dragging of conscious animals by any part of their body, except in the rare case where a non-ambulatory animal must be moved from a life-threatening situation.
- Purposefully dropping or throwing animals.
- Failure to provide food, water, and care that results in significant harm or death to animals.

- Care and shelter are not provided to non-ambulatory animals (including pain management, pest control, protection from predators, protection from weather) similar to that provided to other animals requiring hospitalization.
- Non-ambulatory animals are not provided with adequate feed and water daily in a manner that encourages consumption (All animals must be able to reach feed/water provided).
- Blunt force is a euthanasia method that is used at this facility.
- Written protocol for terminally sick or severely injured (and not treatable) calves does not include being euthanized in a timely manner (Timely manner is defined as euthanasia that is conducted in less than 4 hours from making the decision to euthanize).
- Animals in extreme distress (the situation is determined to be irreversible) are not euthanized in a timely manner (Timely manner is defined as euthanasia is conducted in less than 4 hours from making the decision to euthanize).
- Removal of a teat due to mastitis is not acceptable unless for a medical reason and completed by the direction of a licensed veterinarian. The use of disinfectants in the identified quarter with mastitis is unacceptable.
- Animals are identified as severely lame (4 or 5) in the general population by the auditor.
- Tail docking is practiced on the dairy (owned or purchased replacements).
- Animals are kept in confinement for longer than 2 hours (except in the parlor and hoof trimming holding areas) do not have access to water.
- Stanchion or tie stalls are used on this facility.
- **Electric prods are not used during handling unless there is an imminent risk of injury to the animal or the handler.**
- Heifer calves do not receive at least 4 quarts or 10% of body weight of colostrum or equivalent colostrum replacer within 12 hours of birth.
- Bull calves do not receive at least 4 quarts or 10% of body weight of colostrum or equivalent colostrum replacer within 12 hours of birth or are humanely euthanized at birth.
- Tethers are used on this facility.
- Calves do not have access to feed (solid feed at day 3) and water (day 1).
- Electric prods are used to drive calves.
- Branding (hot or freeze) is conducted on this facility. (includes purchased heifers and cows).

### **Major Non-conformances:**

Issues that directly affect animal well-being (Examples- Animal observations, employee observations, body condition, locomotion, leg lesions, etc.). These items must be addressed with an approved corrective action plan within 10 days of the audit report. A verification audit/desk audit will be performed within 30-60 days of receiving the corrective action plan. *\*Items identified with an asterisk are major non-conformances.*

### **Minor Non-conformances:**

Issues that have an indirect effect on animal well-being (Examples- Standard operating procedures, records, documentation, etc.). These items must be addressed within 30 days of the audit report. These items will be verified at the time of the next audit (before the end of the certification cycle).

## 1. MANAGEMENT

- 1.1. Facility has a written animal welfare policy/**Cow Care Agreement**
- 1.2. Animal welfare policy includes a zero tolerance of willful abuse and neglect
- 1.3. Animal welfare policy includes directive that any occurrence of willful abuse or neglect must be reported immediately to their respective supervisor, or hotline number if applicable for reporting observed abuse/neglect
- 1.4. Caretakers have been trained to the animal welfare policy and are aware of consequences. (Verified via interviews and annual training records.)
- 1.5. The animal welfare policy is posted in worker's native language in a prominent location (break room, locker room, lunchroom, etc.) to be continually visible for all animal caretakers or handlers to view
- 1.6. There is a documented record of the animal welfare policy/Cow Care Agreement signed and dated by the caretaker(s) prior to start of work at the respective site.
- 1.7. Management has a written protocol/process for how to respond to a documented case of animal abuse and a protection process to protect those who report any abuse.
- 1.8. Written training records verify caretaker (employee, family member, or contracted service) training, including date of training, training topic, trainer, and signature of trainee as applicable to the caretaker and his/her responsibilities.
- 1.9. Training program includes written procedures for:
  - 1.9.1. Animal handling procedures, including a process to follow when introducing newly delivered animals into the dairy
  - 1.9.2. Milking techniques
  - 1.9.3. Calf care
  - 1.9.4. Foot Care
    - 1.9.4.1. There must be documentation to show that the individuals have been trained on proper techniques, pain mitigation, and withdrawal times. Records of training are to be provided to the dairy.
  - 1.9.5. Hospital area management (applicable caretakers)
  - 1.9.6. Non-ambulatory animal management
  - 1.9.7. Euthanasia program (applicable caretakers)
    - 1.9.7.1. If a contracted service (renderer) is hired and conducts euthanasia on the dairy, there must be documentation to show that the individuals have been trained on proper euthanasia techniques. Records are to be provided to the dairy.
  - 1.9.8. Emergency procedures
  - 1.9.9. Farm protocols and SOP's are accessible and written in a language that employees understand
- 1.10. Farm has a permanent animal identification plan in place to be able to track animals
- 1.11. Farm has a written farm plan consisting of standard operating procedures for emergencies, facilities repair, and maintenance.
- 1.12. Farm has a written Emergency Contact Sheet that is posted and readily accessible by employees.
- 1.13. The emergency action plan includes the following (if applicable):
  - 1.13.1. Key farm contact names
  - 1.13.2. Local emergency personnel
  - 1.13.3. Herd veterinarian
  - 1.13.4. Farm location and directions (full address of the property or 911 addresses)
  - 1.13.5. Map of the facility

- 1.14. Farm has a written Emergency Action Plan and employees are trained
- 1.15. Plan needs to include the following:
  - 1.15.1. Major weather events for the area (examples include: tornado, blizzard, hurricane, extreme heat, etc.):
  - 1.15.2. Fire
  - 1.15.3. Power outage
  - 1.15.4. Catastrophic mortality loss - humane method(s) and disposal plan(s) are in place.
  - 1.15.5. Emergency Warning systems and generators are available, maintained, and fueled.
  - 1.15.6. Emergency Warning Systems and generators are tested and recorded monthly
- 1.16. Farm has an emergency action system for confined housing (cross ventilated and tunnel ventilated). (*Confinement buildings with solid sides must have an alarm system and access to generator (can be on-site within 1/2 hr.) Generator can be automatic start up, manual start or PTO driven generator.*)
- 1.17. Internal checks (audits) are completed at the dairy regarding animal observations (body conditioning, hygiene, leg/hoof lesions, and locomotion scores) on an annual basis

## 2. HEALTH

- 2.1. Farm has a written, current herd health plan (HHP) consisting of standard operating procedures including, but not limited to:
  - 2.1.1. Biosecurity
  - 2.1.2. Nutrition
  - 2.1.3. Non-ambulatory animal management
  - 2.1.4. Euthanasia
  - 2.1.5. Culling and transportation
  - 2.1.6. Daily observation
  - 2.1.7. Newborn and milk-fed dairy calf management
  - 2.1.8. Vaccinations
  - 2.1.9. Diseased and injured animal management
  - 2.1.10. Treatment of common diseases
  - 2.1.11. Control plans with implementation schedule for parasites, pests, and flies,
  - 2.1.12. Lameness prevention
  - 2.1.13. Pain management
  - 2.1.14. Maternity cow management
  - 2.1.15. Needle tracking and broken needles (appropriate use and disposal, protocol for actions if needle breaks off into animal, etc.)
  - 2.1.16. Milking process/routine
- 2.2. The herd health plan is reviewed regularly (minimum of annually) by management and the herd veterinarian for effectiveness of treatment protocols and herd morbidity issues (records reviewed may include hospital, calving, fresh cow, calf health, foot health, mastitis, etc.). Record the date of the last review.
- 2.3. If the farm is Organic the herd health plan records are kept to confirm treatments are occurring on any animals that need to receive conventional medical attention.
- 2.4. Products used at the farm must provide treatment per the veterinarian direction (Dull-IT not approved for program)
- 2.5. Pain intervention is included in the HHP in areas relevant to:
  - 2.5.1. Animal illness,
  - 2.5.2. Injury,
  - 2.5.3. Surgery,
  - 2.5.4. Dehorning,

- 2.5.5. Hoof care,
- 2.5.6. Castration,
- 2.5.7. Pain-inducing processes (addressing both calves and cows)
- 2.5.8. Extra label medications have directions for use on them per prescribing veterinarian and workers are trained on them
- 2.5.9. Workers are trained on administering each medication.
- 2.6. Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) can include: employee training by the herd veterinarian on animal treatments and procedures (hospital protocols, dehorning, pain management), prescriptions, or documentation from the veterinarian of a recent visit to the dairy
- 2.7. VCPR is signed by the farm owner/management and the veterinarian
- 2.8. The documented VCPR is updated annually or more often as needed
- 2.9. Farm has a documented process for Veterinary Feed Directives (VFD) if medicated feeds are used on the dairy.
- 2.10. Facility has a written foot care protocol that includes:
  - 2.10.1. Use of a trained hoof trimmer using a chute to evaluate animal feet
  - 2.10.2. Directive that no hot irons are to be used for cauterizing during trimming (record process only if hot irons are used by herd vet with pain blocks.)
  - 2.10.3. Communication chain for an animal observed to be limping or questioned in pain by the employee
  - 2.10.4. Daily observations, evaluation, and care of cows being treated for foot problems (wrap evaluation, wound evaluation)
  - 2.10.5. Hoof trimming and hoof corrective treatment that are likely to cause severe pain and or/discomfort must be provided with local anesthesia (2% lidocaine, regional anesthesia, etc.)”
  - 2.10.6. Training of personnel in handling and treating lame animals
  - 2.10.7. Use of managed footbaths (if needed as part of their foot care protocol)(when used, verify that they are cleaned and maintained to be effective)
  - 2.10.8. Designated pen for chronic and severe lame cows (closest to milking facilities)
  - 2.10.9. Directive for all animals scoring a 4 or 5 on a lameness score to be placed into the hospital pen, treated, and receive pain mitigation (blocks, wraps, extra bedding, medications)
  - 2.10.10. Holding areas (including the chute) for cattle in the trimming process provide a non-slip surface for cattle to stand on.
  - 2.10.11. Holding areas for cattle being trimmed provide water if the animals are held for more than 4 hours.
- 2.11. The herd health plan includes a protocol for minimizing animal discomfort (therapeutic care, extra bedding, fly/pest control, isolation) and optimizing animal recovery in animals following surgery (Displaced Abomasum’s, C-Sections) or injury
- 2.12. Animal health products require proper storage based on instructions located on the label or according to veterinarian recommendations.
- 2.13. Animal health products are stored in their original containers bearing the product label.
- 2.14. If animal health products are stored in another container, the container must be clearly marked and labeled with product name and expiration date.
- 2.15. Animal health products must not be expired. Out-dated materials are properly disposed.
- 2.16. Sharps are contained and disposed of properly

### 3. HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT

- 3.1. \* Facility provides a clean, dry environment in the hospital area
- 3.2. Health records are updated daily (or as needed depending on animals being treated) and accessible for caretakers involved with health treatments
- 3.3. \*Animals in hospital pens are monitored daily
- 3.4. \* Surgical techniques (Displaced Abomasum's, C-Sections) are done by a licensed veterinarian or personnel that have been trained by a licensed veterinarian (and undergo a documented refresher training at least annually) Personnel are overseen by the veterinarian and the veterinarian is available for consultation if issues arise; **the herd health plan includes pain mitigation protocol**
- 3.5. Personnel are trained to use appropriate methods (interview or record) to move non-ambulatory animals
- 3.6. \* Proper equipment (equipment must be large enough for animals that might have to be moved and does not allow body contact with the ground while being moved) is available to move non-ambulatory animals of all sizes
- 3.7. Care and shelter is provided to non-ambulatory and ambulatory animals (including pain management, pest control, protection from predators, protection from weather) similar to that provided to other hospitalized animals **(CRITICAL)**
- 3.8. Non-ambulatory animals are given adequate feed and water daily in a manner that encourages consumption (All animals must be able to reach feed/water provided) **(CRITICAL)**
- 3.9. Euthanasia plan is written and includes:
  - 3.9.1. Euthanasia is done by an AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association/) acceptable method {gunshot (rifle preferred), captive bolt with a secondary method, or needle injection of euthanasia solution by a veterinarian}
  - 3.9.2. If gunshot (rifle) is used and it is a .22 magnum caliber or greater, the shell must be a solid point bullet (AVMA/AABP recommendation with an insensibility check)
  - 3.9.3. Blunt force is a euthanasia method that is used at this facility (not approved by AVMA guidelines or this program). **(CRITICAL)**
  - 3.9.4. Written protocol includes confirmation of insensibility (no eye reflex) and confirmation of death (lack of a heartbeat, lack of respiration)
  - 3.9.5. Written euthanasia protocol includes the **AABP, AVMA, or a vet approved euthanasia decision tree** (and the euthanasia process itself) is to be made in a timely fashion.
  - 3.9.6. Written protocol for terminally sick or severely injured (and not treatable) calves includes being euthanized in a timely manner (Timely manner is defined as euthanasia that is conducted in less than 4 hours from the time of the decision to euthanize) **(CRITICAL)**
  - 3.9.7. Animals in extreme distress (the situation is determined to be irreversible) are euthanized in a timely manner (Timely manner is defined as euthanasia that is conducted in less than 4 hours from the time of the decision to euthanize) **(CRITICAL)**
  - 3.9.8. Equipment is in good working order (written record of cleaning and usage)
  - 3.9.9. Euthanasia equipment is stored and locked (only those trained have access)
- 3.10. Treatment records are current and accessible to employees involved in animal treatments
- 3.11. Records of medication use and treatment that includes animal identification, date of treatment, drug administered, dosage, route of administration, withdrawal time, and initials of individual treating animal.
- 3.12. \*Mortality records are recorded and reviewed by management annually (or as needed if problems arise).

- 3.13. \*Mortality in adult animals is  $\leq 8\%$
- 3.14. \*Mortality in weaned calves is  $\leq 2\%$
- 3.15. \*Mortality in pre-weaned calves (24 hrs. to weaning)  $\leq 5\%$
- 3.16. \*Mortality in calves birth to 24 hours of age  $\leq 6\%$
- 3.17. Records are to identify as either euthanized vs. natural causes or animals culled and to be available for management review (calves, heifers, and cows)
- 3.18. \*If mortality is above the program standards (8% in adult animals, 2% in weaned calves, & 5% in pre-weaned) there is a veterinarian approved plan in place to address mortality concerns (note the plan implementation date, Veterinarian name, and documentation viewed to verify the plan is implemented).
- 3.19. Removal of a teat due to mastitis is not acceptable unless for a medical reason and completed by the direction of a licensed veterinarian. The use of disinfectants in the identified quarter with mastitis is also unacceptable. **(CRITICAL)**
- 3.20. A written process is in place for the animals that are determined as severely lame (4 or 5) and are located in the hospital pen, (treat, cull, euthanize).
- 3.21. Animals are identified as severely lame (4 or 5) in the general population by the auditor **(CRITICAL)**.
- 3.22. \*Animals identified as severely lame must have housing that is clean, dry, and must be in a loose housing facility (bed pack, pastures, sand) and must be located close to a milking facility.

#### 4. ANIMAL OBSERVATIONS (Note: close up cows defined by the dairy)

##### *Herd locomotion:*

- 4.1. \* $\leq 5\%$  of lactating cows score  $\geq 3.0$  on observation (leaving the parlor)
- 4.2. \* $\leq 5\%$  of close up dry cows score  $> 3.0$  on observation (group housing only)
- 4.3. \* $\leq 3\%$  of cattle (weaning to breeding) score  $> 3.0$  on observation
- 4.4. \* $\leq 3\%$  of cattle (breeding to calving) score  $> 3.0$  on observation

##### *Body condition score:*

- 4.5. \* $\leq 3\%$  of lactating cows score  $< 2.0$  on observation
- 4.6. \* $\leq 10\%$  of lactating cows score  $> 4.0$  on observation
- 4.7. \* $\leq 3\%$  of close up cows score  $< 2.0$  on observation
- 4.8. \* $\leq 10\%$  of close up cows score  $> 4.0$  on observation
- 4.9. \* $\leq 3\%$  of calves (birth to weaning) score  $< 2.0$  on observation
- 4.10. \* $\leq 10\%$  of calves (birth to weaning) score  $> 4.0$  on observation
- 4.11. \* $\leq 3\%$  of calves (weaning to breeding) score  $< 2.0$  on observation
- 4.12. \* $\leq 10\%$  of calves (weaning to breeding) score  $> 4.0$  on observation
- 4.13. \* $\leq 3\%$  of cattle (breeding to calving) score  $< 2.0$  on observation
- 4.14. \* $\leq 10\%$  of cattle (breeding to calving) score  $> 4.0$  on observation

##### *Herd hygiene:*

- 4.15. \* $\leq 8\%$  of lactating and close up dry cows score  $> 2.0$  on observation
- 4.16. \* $\leq 10\%$  of calves (birth to weaning)  $> 2.0$  on observation
- 4.17. \* $\leq 10\%$  of cattle (weaning to breeding) score  $> 2.0$  on observation
- 4.18. \* $\leq 10\%$  of cattle (breeding to calving) score  $> 2.0$  on observation

##### *Leg lesions:*

- 4.19. \* $\leq 2\%$  of lactating cows observed score a 3.0 on observation
- 4.20. \* $\leq 2\%$  of close up dry cows observed score a 3.0 on observation
- 4.21. \* $\leq 2\%$  of calves (birth to weaning) score a 3.0 on observation
- 4.22. \* $\leq 2\%$  of cattle (weaning to breeding) score a 3.0 on observation
- 4.23. \* $\leq 2\%$  of cattle (breeding to calving) score a 3.0 on observation



- 4.24. Tail docking is prohibited from being practiced on the dairy (owned or purchased replacements) **(CRITICAL)** Switch trimming is allowed.
- 4.25. If euthanasia is observed during the audit, caretakers confirm insensibility and death, after the euthanasia method is applied and before removal from the facility. **If euthanasia is not observed during the audit, an interview with a caretaker is conducted to confirm the euthanasia process.**

## 5. NUTRITION MANAGEMENT

- 5.1. \* Feed is available to lactating cows for at least 20 hours per day
- 5.2. \* Starter Feed/Milk is provided to calves at least twice in a 24-hour period
- 5.3. \* Feed is provided to heifers and dry cows at least one time in a 24-hr period
- 5.4. Feed ration meets the National Research Council (NRC) requirements for dairy cattle for each age and stage of animal (verify through documentation from the nutritionist)
- 5.5. Cows are provided with a minimum of 18 inches per cow at the feed bunk to ensure that animals are able to obtain the **desired body condition score.**
- 5.6. \* Water is positioned throughout the dairy to allow ad lib access to drinking water
- 5.7. \* Water flow matches consumption (animals are not standing around an empty trough)
- 5.8. Water tanks are cleaned on a regular basis and provide clear drinking water
- 5.9. Average score of water troughs cleanliness observed across facility is 2 or less
- 5.10. Water tanks are the proper height for age/size of animals using them
- 5.11. \* Water tanks are protected from freezing
- 5.12. Calves provided with water (in individual buckets) must have access to drinkable water at least twice per day during freezing weather
- 5.13. \* Water is available to cows at the parlor exit (dry lot facilities only)
- 5.14. Animals in confinement longer than 2 hours have access to water (except in the parlor and hoof trimming holding areas) **(CRITICAL)**

## 6. FACILITIES

- 6.1. \* General facilities (gates, fences, flooring, stall loops, shade, headlocks, feed/water troughs, fence lines, drainage lines, etc.) are maintained to prevent animal injury
- 6.2. \* Ensure chutes and headlocks (quick release) are properly functioning to reduce potential animal or operator injury.
- 6.3. \* Electric fences must be designed, maintained, and used so that contact with them does not cause injury
- 6.4. \* Electric backing/crowd gates must be designed, maintained, and used so that contact with them does not cause injury
- 6.5. \* Non-slip footing is provided throughout the facility
- 6.6. \* ≤1% of cows observed fall (observed with lactation groups while exiting the parlor) **A fall occurs when an animal loses an upright position suddenly in which a part of the body other than the limbs touches the ground.**
- 6.7. \* ≤3% of cows observed slip (observed with lactation groups while exiting the parlor) **A slip occurs when a portion of the leg other than the foot touches the ground or floor, or a foot loses contact with the ground or floor in a non-walking manner.**
- 6.8. \* Facility provides adequate lighting
- 6.9. \* Pest control program (flies, birds, rodents, etc.) appears to be effective in minimizing signs of pests
- 6.10. \* Housing air flow controls moisture (condensation), odor, and ammonia at <25ppm (based on auditor smell test)
- 6.11. \* Additional cooling is provided in the holding pen (examples: fans, misters, and/or sprinklers for the size of the pen for animal movement)

- 6.12. \* Process viewed regarding minimizing cross-contamination (from feed to manure, manure to feed, use of different equipment)
- 6.13. \* Sampled animals have access to shade no matter the area or region that the dairy resides (50 sq. ft. for 800 lbs. plus animals; 25 sq. ft. for younger)
- 6.14. \* Sampled animals are observed and evaluated for signs of heat stress (i.e., open mouth breathing, lethargic, unsteady, panting, etc.).
- 6.15. \* Where winter conditions dictate, shelter (e.g., windbreaks, mounding) is required
- 6.16. \* Animals giving birth outdoors must have shelter and protection from extreme weather conditions (sun, wind, rain, and snow), from predators, and the area is well drained.
- 6.17. Signs throughout the facility are posted to control visitor entry (farm gate signs or signs with directions to the office)
- 6.18. Stanchion/Tie stalls are not accepted in this program. Tie stalls do not allow for animals to express their normal behaviors. **CRITICAL**
- 6.19. \* Animals can stand up and lie down easily within the free stall (without hitting hip bones, brisket, or head when getting up).
- 6.20. \* Free stall mattresses are maintained (Edges are not pulled up to trip animals, bedding is maintained daily)
- 6.21. \* Free stalls are bedded (Proper bedding amount equates to leg lesion observations)
- 6.22. \* Dry Lot surfaces, traffic lanes, and dry lot/pasture mounds are maintained to prevent animal injury
- 6.23. \* Traffic lanes are maintained (groomed)
- 6.24. \* Animals housed in dry lots and pastures have access to dry areas during inclement weather
- 6.25. The site is providing 100 square feet of area per Holstein sized cow in compost-bedded pack barns
- 6.26. \* The site is providing 85 square feet of area per Jersey sized cow in compost-bedded pack barns.
- 6.27. Bed pack material must be dry (not sticking to the animal) and comfortable to the cow.
- 6.28. \* Pens in 2-row barns are stocked less than <120% animal: stall ratio.
- 6.29. \* Pens in 3-row barns are stocked less than <120% animal: stall ratio.
- 6.30. \* Dry lot pens are stocked less than <120% animal: headlock ratio
  - Free stalls, headlocks, and feed bunk space are measured during the audit for stocking rates.

## 7. PARLOR MANAGEMENT

- 7.1. Milking equipment has been tested and documented (in the past 6 months)
- 7.2. Wait times in the parlor/holding pen are less than 5 hr./pen/24 hr. (If a site has two parlors on the same premise location, then the auditor will observe 2 turns per parlor to determine timing)
- 7.3. \* Animals are calm through the milking process; parlor behavior is  $\leq 2.0$
- 7.4. Cows are evaluated (visually, palpation, stripping) for mastitis as part of milking routine
- 7.5. Teats are treated (dipped or sprayed) post-milking
- 7.6. Rapid exit: if used, there is adequate room for cows to exit without being hit by stalls
- 7.7. Crowd gate: if used, caretakers are trained to use the gate sensibly and not aggressively (not to push cattle)
- 7.8. Crowd gate: if used, cows are calm in holding pens
- 7.9. There is a process in place for animals to be monitored when using a robotic system for animal observations (lameness, BCS, etc.)
- 7.10. There is a system in place if the robotic system malfunctions or not properly working.

7.11. Producer is able to identify cows that have not been milked if the system is not working properly and has a system to milk cows until robotic system is fully functioning.

## 8. HANDLING & TRANSPORT

- 8.1. Employees trained in animal handling and appropriate tools for movement (flags, gates, flight zones)
- 8.2. Employees are specifically trained on or supervised when using moving or restraint devices (halters, hip clamps, headlocks, chutes)
- 8.3. \*Nose tongs are not to be used as part of this program as an acceptable moving device.
- 8.4. \*Hip clamps are not to be used as part of this program as an acceptable moving device, only as a method to assist the cow to stand.
- 8.5. Non-employees (contractors, consultants, foot trimmers, breeders, and drivers) on the farm are given the same expectations in writing regarding animal handling and care and sign an animal care protocol form.
- 8.6. \* Animals move calmly throughout facility during the audit
- 8.7. Written animal handling protocol gives clear directives to NOT break tails or ear twisting when moving animals. (Proper tail use for movement is to release the tail once the animal moves forward. The tail is not continuously twisted).
- 8.8. Only handling tools that are approved by management (and caretakers have been trained on proper use) are used during loading and unloading
- 8.9. Electric prods are not used during handling unless there is an imminent risk of injury to the animal or the handler. **(CRITICAL)**
- 8.10. Animals are evaluated for their ability to survive a haul without problems prior to being loaded on truck for shipping include:
  - 8.10.1. Animal walks easily,
  - 8.10.2. Animal is healthy with no residue,
  - 8.10.3. Animal has a BCS of 2.0 or better,
  - 8.10.4. Animal is not blind in both eyes,
  - 8.10.5. Animal scores a locomotion score of 3 or less and the animal is not exhibiting signs of severe pain,
  - 8.10.6. Animal is able to stand on all hooves;
  - 8.10.7. Animals with questionable survival chances are to be euthanized (including calves)
- 8.11. Directive for all animals scoring a 4 or 5 on a lameness score are not to be transported.
- 8.12. A written protocol states that any animal transported from the dairy is the responsibility of the management team. Management must ensure that anyone involved with handling and transportation are aware of their responsibilities.
- 8.13. Written protocol clearly directs that animals in question of surviving the haul are NOT to be shipped, but returned to the hospital pen for further treatment or euthanized
- 8.14. \* Holding pens used to retain animals prior to transport must provide feed (if held more than 4 hours) and water (if held more than 2 hours)
- 8.15. \* Loading facilities (gates, chutes) are maintained to be safe for livestock and caretakers
- 8.16. \* Loading facilities have non-slip footing (grooving, non-skid mats, sand, bedding) and with measures to prevent animals falling off or getting their legs trapped
- 8.17. \* Trailers used to haul calves <2 week are bedded
- 8.18. \* Calves that are injured, too weak to stand, or are unable to stand on all hooves are not transported, but given therapeutic care or humanely euthanized
- 8.19. \*Transporters (hired, employee, and/or family member) have received their Beef Quality Assurance Transport (BQAT) certification in order to haul dairy cows and/or calves off the farm.

8.20. Distance that calves travel from dairy to next destination (Information gathering in 2025)

## 9. CALVES AND HEIFERS

- 9.1. The farm has a written protocol for colostrum management, and the protocol includes:
  - 9.1.1. Testing for antibody amount.
  - 9.1.2. Monitoring calves for successful passive transfer.
  - 9.1.3. Monthly review of the colostrum program and passive transfer monitoring by the herd veterinarian or management.
- 9.2. Heifer calves receive at least 4 quarts or 10% of body weight of colostrum or equivalent colostrum replacer within 12 hours of birth **(CRITICAL)**
- 9.3. Bull calves either receive at least 4 quarts or 10% of body weight of colostrum or equivalent colostrum replacer within 12 hours of birth **or** are humanely euthanized at birth **(CRITICAL)**
- 9.4. \* Neonatal calves being held for transport directly to slaughter ("bob veal") must be provided at least 4 quarts or 10% of body weight of colostrum or equivalent colostrum replacer each day and provided housing and medical care similar to other calves
- 9.5. Tethers are prohibited for use on the facility. **(CRITICAL)**
- 9.6. \* Calves are born in a clean, dry environment
- 9.7. \* Calf navels are dipped to avoid infection
- 9.8. Calves have access to feed (solid feed at day 3) and water (day 1) **(CRITICAL)**
- 9.9. \* Calf housing is dry, clean, comfortable bedding, and adequately ventilated
- 9.10. \* Calf pens are dry, clean, comfortable bedding, and adequately ventilated **(Bare metal, wire, wood, and stone are unacceptable. Concrete, rubber mats, mattresses, and waterbeds without sufficient bedding substrate to avoid injury are not acceptable.)**
- 9.11. \* Individual calf housing allows the calf to turn around
- 9.12. \* Calf housing provides calf protection from predators and weather
- 9.13. \* Calves are observed daily for health issues
- 9.14. Written protocol exists for flagging (or communicating with management or personnel) to treating sick calves
- 9.15. \* Calves are vaccinated according to veterinarian or industry recommendations
- 9.16. \* Supernumerary teats are not to be removed unless they interfere with the teat cup at milking. **If removed due to issues with the teat cup, this procedure must be done with the use of anesthetic and under the direction of the veterinarian**
- 9.17. \* Calves are castrated according to AVMA and AABP recommendations (banding, scalpel, **up to 3 months of age**); veterinary supervision/discretion and training; herd health plan defines protocol including pain mitigation
- 9.18. \* **Calves disbudded or dehorned must be completed by 8 weeks of age or younger (AVMA/AABP);** if disbudded or dehorned, anesthesia (lidocaine) and analgesia (such as aspirin, flunixin, meloxicam, ketoprofen) is used as determined in the herd health plan; medications provided as extra-label use by the herd veterinarian have directions for use on them; workers are trained on administering of each medication.
- 9.19. **\*If caustic paste is utilized for disbudding, pain mitigation is provided using appropriate anesthesia and analgesia, and caustic paste is not utilized after day 7 of age.**
- 9.20. \*Calves dehorned after 60 days of age, are completed by a licensed veterinarian using the appropriate anesthesia and analgesia and are cauterized.
- 9.21. If animals are purchased, the dairy is provided with records for disbudding that show the method and the age of the calf when disbudding occurred. (Information gathering 2026)
- 9.22. Electric prods are used to drive calves **(CRITICAL)**
- 9.23. Electric shock devices (electric prods) are to be used only by those that have been trained by the herd veterinarian or herd manager. (records of training need to be provided).

- 9.24. Branding (hot or freeze) is prohibited in states that do not require it. Branding is only acceptable if required by state law (hot or freeze branding) **(CRITICAL)** Branding is prohibited with purchased cattle. This includes heifers and cows purchased to bring into the herd. This rule will be implemented starting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. States with branding requirements are (AABP): Arizona, Idaho, New Mexico, and Utah. Dairies that are required to brand per the state include in the herd health plan protocol including pain mitigation.
- 9.25. \* Calves will be moved to group housing within at least 70 days of birth
- 9.26. Include in the Herd Health Plan processes for calves that need more attention and the process for keeping the identified calves out of group housing

## **10. Willful Acts of Abuse (CRITICAL)**

**10.1.** Willful acts of abuse and neglect are prohibited. Examples are (this list is not exhaustive): Intentionally applying prods to sensitive areas of the animal such as eyes, ears, nose, genitals, or udders. Malicious hitting/beating of an animal. This includes forcefully striking an animal with a closed fist, foot, handling equipment (sorting board, rattle paddle, etc.) or other hard/solid objects that can cause pain, bruising, or injury. Moving animals in a manner that would cause them to fall. Dragging of conscious animals by any part of their body, except in the rare case where a non-ambulatory animal must be moved from, a life-threatening situation. Purposefully dropping or throwing animals. Failure to provide food, water, and care that results in significant harm or death to animals. Wattling, ear notching, ear splitting.

## **Validus Audit Process**

The Validus process includes an annual audit (per calendar year). Dairies must have a cumulative score of  $\geq 80\%$  and no critical issues identified on the day of the audit to retain certification. Any item identified in the audit report that is a non-conformance will need to have a corrective action plan developed for the steps to be taken to address the non-conformance.

- The action plan developed by the client will be reviewed by Validus and potentially any supplier/retailer that is purchasing product from the producer in order to see that steps are being taken to address the non-conformances
- Action plans will be reviewed to ensure that there is a timeline in place to complete the non-conformances
- Any action item that is not addressed within the timeline set forth will result in an increase in severity
  - Example:
    - A minor non-conformance will become a major non-conformance with the potential that the certification will be held until completed/addressed based on the action plan
    - If the non-conformance was a major non-conformance there is potential that non-conformance may become a critical non-conformance.
- Certification will not be issued unless the corrective action plan is submitted, reviewed, and approved by Validus

Animal Welfare point changes examples:

- Audit question-
  - Less than 3% of lactating cows observed score less than 2.0 BCS (note percentage)- Changed from 10 to 20 points
  - Less than 2% of lactating & close up cows observed score 3 on observation (note percentage)- Changed from 10 to 20 points

The Validus Animal Welfare Review-Dairy committee reviews the standards on an annual basis to make changes and improvements. The committee is made up of the following individuals: Dr. James Reynolds, Dr. James West, Dr. Wendell Cole, Dr. Jan Shearer, Dr. Abigale Zoltick, and Dr. Rick Tubbs.

Validus auditor background

- Validus utilizes auditors that have a degree and 5 years' experience in the industry or a minimum of 15 years of experience within the industry.
- All auditors are required to go through classroom and on-farm shadows before completing on-farm audits.
- Validus auditors go through annual trainings and are subject to an oversight inspection.
- Auditors sign a "Code of Conduct" to ensure that there is no previous or current conflict of interest working relationship between the auditor and the dairy producer.

## **Validus Potential Changes for 2026**

- Looking at ways to improve the current scoring system. New potential scoring will place more emphasis on animal observation areas and will be based on a format similar to a Food Safety audit scoring systems.
- Validus is going to incorporate the current On-Farm Security audit tool into the Validus Animal Welfare Review-Dairy program. This will close out the On-Farm Security program and place more emphasis on steps taken at the dairy from a biosecurity aspect.

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