



RSPCA Australia Standard
Dairy Calves

January 2021 | V1.1

RSPCA 

RSPCA AUSTRALIA STANDARD

DAIRY CALVES

JANUARY 2021

v1.1

This *RSPCA Australia Standard* applies to dairy and dairy crossbred calves raised for meat production in Australia. The *Standard* must be read in conjunction with the RSPCA Certified *Operations Manual* which contains information about the program's processes and operation.

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RSPCA Australia
PO Box 265
Deakin West ACT 2600

Tel 02 6282 8300
Email rspca@rspca.org.au
Web rspca.org.au

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THE STANDARD

1 STAFF TRAINING AND ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

Training and competency (on farm, during transport, at the abattoir)

- 1.01 Persons responsible for the management and/or handling of calves must be appropriately trained and competent in their required tasks, including:
- a) recognising signs of ill health
 - b) appropriate care and/or treatment of injury, disease or distress
 - c) maintaining the calf's rearing environment
 - d) husbandry procedures and general calf management
 - e) observing calves and identifying normal and abnormal behaviour
 - f) **euthanasia** of calves, including observing signs of death
 - g) handling and movement of calves
 - h) loading, transport and unloading of calves
 - i) slaughter of calves, including observing signs of unconsciousness
 - j) accurate record keeping.
- 1.02 Staff induction/training programs and standard operating procedures must include the requirements of the Standard.
- 1.03 Records of staff training must be maintained.
- 1.04 Staff must be available to respond **promptly** to problems that arise.
- 1.05 Instances of animal neglect, cruelty or other breaches of animal welfare legislation must be reported immediately to the relevant regulatory authority and RSPCA Certified.

Internal assessment

- 1.06 All **sites** must have internal assessment systems in place to facilitate on-going conformance with the Standard.
- 1.07 Records of completed internal assessments must be maintained.

Animal Care Statement

- 1.08 An Animal Care Statement must be completed and implemented.
- 1.09 The Animal Care Statement must specify general management and standard operating procedures as relevant, including but not limited to:
- a) procedures for reporting breaches of animal welfare legislation
 - b) internal assessment systems, including regularity of assessments
 - c) contingency plans and procedures to manage the rearing environment in the event of power failure, equipment failure or other breakdown, fire, flood, drought, **extreme weather** conditions, or other **major reportable event**
 - d) supply of calves, including breeding strategy employed for replacement and non-replacement calves on property of birth
 - e) **colostrum** feeding and testing for **successful passive transfer**

- f) feeding and watering of calves (including **milk feeding**, **milk temperature**, and **concentrate feeding**)
- g) **weaning** management
- h) environment and housing
- i) **paddock** management
- j) maintaining **stocking density** and managing **group size**
- k) calf husbandry procedures (castration and/or disbudding as relevant)
- l) calf handling
- m) calf observation
- n) calf transport, including emergency arrangements and measures to minimise the risk of heat stress and cold stress
- o) slaughter.

1.10 The Animal Care Statement must be reviewed on an annual basis.

1.11 The current Animal Care Statement must be provided to RSPCA Certified upon request.

Records

1.12 All records required to be maintained must be:

- a) available on **site** at the time of an assessment (applicable to facility and calf records only)
- b) provided to RSPCA Certified upon request
- c) retained for at least 1 year (applicable to calf records only).

2 HEALTH

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

Veterinary Health Plan

- 2.01 A Veterinary Health Plan must be completed and implemented.
- 2.02 The Veterinary Health Plan must specify calf health management and monitoring procedures, including but not limited to:
- a) Biosecurity, including quarantine, cleaning and sanitation
 - b) routine health monitoring, including identification and treatment of weak, ill or injured calves
 - c) vaccination program
 - d) use of veterinary medicines, including **antimicrobials**
 - e) any other treatments or additives, including probiotics
 - f) **euthanasia** and signs of death
 - g) identification and treatment of physical injury
 - h) identification and treatment of disease
 - i) control of internal and external parasites
 - j) mortalities and **trigger level**
 - k) pest animal control.
- 2.03 The Veterinary Health Plan must be reviewed on an annual basis and authorised by the designated registered veterinarian.
- 2.04 The current Veterinary Health Plan must be provided to RSPCA Certified upon request.

Vaccination

- 2.05 The Veterinary Health Plan must incorporate a vaccination program to protect calves from diseases for which an effective vaccine is available and which may represent a risk to the calves at a particular facility as determined by **veterinary advice**.

Medicines

- 2.06 **Antimicrobials** must only be administered under **veterinary advice**.
- 2.07 Any **antimicrobial** classified by the Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance as being of 'high' or 'medium' importance for human medicine is not permitted for use in calves, unless **veterinary advice** indicates that the only effective treatment option is an **antimicrobial** from these categories.
- 2.08 Where **antimicrobials** are used, an **Antimicrobial Stewardship Plan** must:
- a) be completed and implemented
 - b) specify current type, quantity and nature (therapeutic or preventative) of **antimicrobial** use in a format to be agreed with by RSPCA Certified
 - c) consider available evidence of **antimicrobial** resistance in the Australian dairy calf herd
 - d) specify a year-on-year strategy which considers the reduction, refinement and/or replacement of preventative **antimicrobial** use
 - e) specify husbandry, management strategies and any alternative preventative treatments, where used, to manage disease risk during any planned reduction, refinement and/or replacement of **antimicrobials**
 - f) be reviewed on an annual basis in order to inform the following year's strategy
 - g) be authorised by the designated registered veterinarian
 - h) be provided to RSPCA Certified as part of the Veterinary Health Plan.

Additives

2.09 The use of **growth promotants** is not permitted.

Health monitoring

2.10 Quarantine and biosecurity procedures must be in place to minimise the risk of introducing and spreading disease among calves.

2.11 Facilities (**sick pen/paddock**) to isolate calves for special treatment and attention must:

- a) be available and identified as such
- b) be constructed and sited so that each calf can see, smell and hear other calves.

2.12 Calves that have been identified as diseased or injured must be appropriately treated or **euthanased promptly**.

2.13 Where the cause and/or appropriate treatment of ill health or disease is unable to be identified, **veterinary advice** must be sought immediately and followed accordingly.

2.14 Dead calves must be removed **promptly** and disposed of in a safe and hygienic manner.

2.15 Any **major reportable event** must be reported to RSPCA Certified within 24 hours of observation.

2.16 Where a **major reportable event** is identified, records must be maintained specifying the:

- a) nature of the problem
- b) date the problem was identified
- c) nature of **correction** undertaken
- d) date **correction** was undertaken
- e) nature of the **corrective action**.

Health records

2.17 Health records must be kept for all calves.

2.18 Health records must contain details of the following:

- a) vaccinations
- b) treatments or medicines administered, including **antimicrobials** for both preventative and therapeutic use
- c) diseases
- d) injuries
- e) dates of veterinarian visits, notes of problems identified and **correction** taken
- f) incidences of mortality **trigger level** reached, notes of problems identified and the **corrective action** taken.

2.19 Where calves are temporarily segregated for treatment or recovery, a record must be maintained of:

- a) the reason for segregation
- b) treatment where applicable
- c) length of stay
- d) outcome for the calf.

- 2.20 Daily records of calf mortality must be maintained with details of:
- a) total mortalities
 - b) mortalities separated into deaths and calves **euthanased**
 - c) the main reason for **euthanasia**
 - d) the type of injury if any calves are **euthanased** due to injury.

3 SUPPLY OF CALVES

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 3.01 Only facilities that have been routinely assessed by RSPCA Certified and shown to comply with the Standard may be used to source calves.
- 3.02 Calves must not be sourced from a saleyard, calf pick-up point, calf scales or other collection facility.
- 3.03 Where calves are not born on the **rearing facility** or **finishing facility**, a record must be kept specifying the name, address and Property Identification Code (PIC) of the property from which calves are sourced.
- 3.04 Calves must be individually identified within 24 hours of birth.
- 3.05 Calves not born on the **rearing facility** or **finishing facility** must be quarantined for a minimum period of 48 hours from day of arrival to protect the health of the existing herd, unless it can be demonstrated that the herd health status of these calves is at least equivalent to their destination facility.
- 3.06 Calves must be allowed to rest for at least 2 hours following arrival at the **rearing facility** or **finishing facility** before further handling can occur unless otherwise advised by the designated registered veterinarian or for the purpose of feeding electrolytes.

Supply of calves to the rearing facility

- 3.07 Calves coming into a **rearing facility** must be:
 - a) full-term calves
 - b) delivered (born) without the use of calving induction
 - c) free from signs of injury, deformity or disease
 - d) ≥ 10 days old unless the **rearing facility** is their property of birth.
- 3.08 A record confirming health status of calves upon entering the **rearing facility** must be kept.

Arrival of calves at the rearing facility or finishing facility

- 3.09 The facility must be appropriately prepared prior to the arrival of the calves. Preparation activities include:
 - a) cleaning and sanitation of equipment
 - b) cleaning and sanitation of housing
 - c) ensuring feeding and watering equipment is operational
 - d) checking water and feed availability and quality
 - e) providing bedding.

Calf records

- 3.10 Calf arrival records must contain details of the following:
 - a) date and time of arrival of calves at the facility
 - b) number of calves placed at the facility
 - c) individual calf identification details
 - d) estimated average calf weight within a **batch**.

4 FEED AND WATER

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 4.01 Calves must have continuous access to clean, drinkable water.
- 4.02 Feed must be provided in sufficient quantity and quality to meet the calf's requirements for growth.
- 4.03 Feeding and drinking equipment must be operating effectively to ensure the calf's daily requirements for feed and water are met.
- 4.04 Feeding and drinking equipment design, distribution, position and height must allow all calves to access feed and water with minimal effort.

Colostrum

- 4.05 The quality and cleanliness of **colostrum** fed to each calf must facilitate **successful passive transfer** of immunity.
- 4.06 Total quantity of **colostrum** fed to the calf must equal at least:
 - a) 4 litres over 2 feeds in the first 12 hours of life and
 - b) 2 litres in the following 12 hours.

Feed

- 4.07 Following their first 24 hours of life until **weaning**, calves must be fed **milk** (this may include **whole milk**, **colostrum** and **transition milk**), **milk replacer** (prepared per manufacturer's instructions), or a combination of the two (this may include **fortified milk**):
 - a) of consistent **milk temperature** (at least 38°C when delivered to calf) and
 - b) until **weaning** commences, at least 3 times in every 24 hours.
- 4.08 For calves ≤30 days old, total daily quantity of **milk** and/or **milk replacer** (or equivalent **milk solids**) offered to the calf following their first 24 hours of life must equal at least 20% of estimated average calf weight within a **batch**.
- 4.09 Calves ≥21 days old, must be given small quantities of roughage in the form of chopped hay which is:
 - a) good quality, fresh and uncontaminated
 - b) a mean length of at least 25mm
 - c) supplied separately to bedding and **environmental enrichment material**
 - d) available to all calves at all times.

Feeding methods

- 4.10 Sufficient **milk** feeding stations and teats must be available to allow all calves within the same group or **pen** to feed at the same time, unless **automatic calf feeders** are used.
- 4.11 Only teat feeders that satisfy the calf's need to suckle are permitted for calves receiving **milk** and/or **milk replacer**.
- 4.12 The position of teats on the teat feeder must enable calves to drink in a natural position.

- 4.13 Where an oesophageal feeding tube is utilised, it must:
- a) only be used for **colostrum** feeding as a measure of last resort within 12 hours of birth when multiple attempts to teat feed the calf at first feed have failed
 - b) be used by a competent operator to ensure correct, calm and careful placement
 - c) be flexible, smooth, clean and undamaged
 - d) be designed and manufactured for the purpose of feeding calves.

Weaning

- 4.14 Where calves are weaned off **milk** and/or **milk replacer**, this must be through a staged reduction in **milk** and/or **milk replacer** allocation over a period of at least 14 days.
- 4.15 Calves must be consistently consuming at least an average of 1.5kg/calf of **concentrate** per day calculated on a **group** basis over at least 3 consecutive days before **weaning** can commence.
- 4.16 **Weaning** must not be completed until calves are at least 8 weeks old.

5 ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 5.01 Calves <8 weeks old must have continuous access to a **shed**.
- 5.02 Calves ≥8 weeks old must have continuous access to a **shed** or **shelter** or **trees**.
- 5.03 Floors, surfaces, fittings, equipment and other facilities in and around the **pen**, **shed**, **shelter** or **paddock** must be designed, constructed, operated and maintained to:
 - a) minimise **thermal discomfort**
 - b) minimise the risk of injury, disease or distress
 - c) reduce noise
 - d) facilitate cleaning.
- 5.04 Cleaning of **pens** and **sheds** must include a minimum 2-week period between **batches** where the **shed/pen** is empty of calves and bedding.
- 5.05 Laneways and races must be designed to facilitate the movement of calves.
- 5.06 A maintenance program must be in place to ensure that facility defects are identified and **promptly** rectified.
- 5.07 A record of facility maintenance and repairs must be maintained.
- 5.08 Pest animal control programs must:
 - a) use the most humane effective techniques that are applicable to the situation
 - b) reduce the risk of impact on non-target species.

Ventilation

- 5.09 **Shed** ventilation must provide adequate air exchange for the age and number of calves.
- 5.10 Ammonia levels must be managed so as not to exceed 10ppm at a height of 10cm above the bedding.
- 5.11 Dust levels within a **shed** or **pen** must be managed to avoid negative impacts on calf welfare.
- 5.12 Calves <8 weeks old must be protected from draughts.

Lighting

- 5.13 Calves must be provided with natural light and dark periods as determined by the local diurnal cycle.
- 5.14 Light intensity measured at calf head height across the **shed**, **shelter** or **pen**, must ensure that no area is lit at less than 100 lux during daylight hours.
- 5.15 Artificial lighting is permitted for the provision of additional light as required at the time of calf observations and/or facility checks.

Flooring

5.16 **Shed, shelter and pen** flooring must:

- a) not be slatted
- b) be solid
- c) be designed, constructed and maintained to prevent accumulation of water and faeces.

Bedding

5.17 **Sheds and pens** must provide calves with continuous access to bedding of good quality, water-absorbing material.

5.18 Sand and stones are not acceptable bedding materials.

5.19 Bedding material must be maintained in order to allow all calves to lie down in a clean and dry lying area in a fully outstretched position at the same time.

5.20 Bedding must be maintained to a minimum average depth of 15cm.

Environmental enrichment

5.21 Calves ≥ 2 weeks old without access to a **paddock**, and calves ≥ 8 weeks old where continuous access to a **paddock** is temporarily denied, must be provided with long hay that is:

- a) fresh and uncontaminated
- b) supplied separately to bedding material
- c) available in racks
- d) available to all calves at all times.

5.22 Calves ≥ 2 weeks old without access to a **paddock**, and calves ≥ 8 weeks old where continuous access to a **paddock** is temporarily denied for a period >7 days, must have continuous access to **environmental enrichment** materials and/or objects that allow calves to express foraging, comfort and play behaviours.

5.23 To prevent undue competition, **environmental enrichment** must be:

- a) provided in sufficient quantity
- b) evenly distributed throughout the facility
- c) easy for calves to access.

5.24 **Environmental enrichment** must be maintained, replaced or changed as necessary to ensure calves maintain interest in the materials and/or objects.

6 Paddock

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 6.01 Calves ≥ 8 weeks old must be given continuous access to a **paddock**, unless:
- under **veterinary advice** for treatment of injury or disease
 - extreme weather** requires calves to be kept within a **shed**
 - within 12 hours of transport.
- 6.02 Where, for calves ≥ 8 weeks old, continuous access to a **paddock** is temporarily denied, the date, duration and reason for confinement must be recorded.
- 6.03 The **paddock** must be actively managed and maintained to:
- encourage calves to access all areas
 - avoid accumulation of water
 - control disease and parasites
 - avoid injury or mortality
 - minimise the risk of fire.
- 6.04 Fences must be constructed and maintained to prevent calves escaping.
- 6.05 The **paddock** must at all times have sufficient shaded areas to allow all calves to access shade at the same time.

7 STOCKING DENSITY

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

Stocking density (pen or shed) – rearing facility

7.01 Total **usable area** available to each calf must consist of at least:

- a) 2.0m² bedding area for calves <10 days old
- b) 2.5m² bedding area for calves ≥10 days and <8 weeks old.

Stocking density (shed or shelter) – calves ≥8 weeks old

7.02 Where a **shed** or **shelter** is available for calves reaching ≤300kg finished weight, total **usable area** available to each calf must be at least 3.0m².

7.03 Where a **shed** or **shelter** is available for calves reaching >300kg finished weight, for every 100kg additional finished weight, an additional **usable area** of 0.5m² must be provided per calf.

Review of stocking density

7.04 Upon occurrence of disease, injury, aggression, other indicators of poor welfare or where there is difficulty managing **pen/shed**/environmental conditions, **stocking density** must be reviewed and if necessary, **usable area** per calf increased to ensure the welfare of the calves and to allow sufficient space:

- a) for feeding, drinking and dunging areas
- b) for resting, exercise, exploration, social and other behaviours.

Records

7.05 The following records must be maintained for each **batch** of calves:

- a) size of **shed/shelter/pen/paddock** as relevant
- b) age/weight of calves in each **shelter/shed/pen/paddock** as relevant
- c) individual calf identification number of calves in each **shelter/shed/pen/paddock** as relevant.

8 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND MANAGEMENT

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

Husbandry

- 8.01 The following husbandry procedures are not permitted:
- a) tethering
 - b) dehorning
 - c) methods of calf identification that involve tattooing, ear notching or hot branding (unless required by law)
 - d) nose-rings or other aversive devices.
- 8.02 **Disbudding** or castration of calves is not permitted, unless the calf is intended to be raised beyond 12 months of age.
- 8.03 **Disbudding** of calves intended to be raised beyond 12 months of age is not permitted, unless the calves' property of birth employs a breeding strategy that includes:
- a) use of heterozygous or homozygous polled bulls or polled bull semen for non-replacement calves
 - b) use of sexed semen for replacement calves.
- 8.04 Where **disbudding** is considered necessary for calves intended to be raised beyond 12 months of age, the procedure must only be carried out:
- a) on calves <6 weeks old with free-floating horn buds
 - b) by a registered veterinarian
 - c) with prior sedation, local anaesthetic and analgesic
 - d) using a hot iron
 - e) with appropriate **post-procedure care**.
- 8.05 Where castration is considered necessary for calves intended to be raised beyond 12 months of age, the procedure must only be carried out:
- a) on calves <6 weeks old
 - b) by a registered veterinarian
 - c) with prior local anaesthetic and analgesic
 - d) with appropriate **post-procedure care**.

Group size and composition

- 8.06 All calves must be **group** housed unless, under **veterinary advice** for treatment of injury or disease.
- 8.07 Calves that have been pair-housed or housed in smaller **groups** must at least remain with their paired calf or another familiar calf when introduced into larger **groups** unless, at the time of introduction:
- a) one of the paired calves requires isolation for treatment of injury or disease
 - b) one of the paired calves has died.
- 8.08 Once stable **groups** have been formed, the mixing of unfamiliar calves must be minimised.
- 8.09 **Group composition** must be such that competition for feed or displacement of calves at feeders is avoided.
- 8.10 **Group** size must be such that unweaned calves held in pens are in **groups** no greater than 30 calves.

Calf observation

- 8.11 Calves' appearance, vocalisations and behaviour must be observed at least 3 times per day in the first 3 days of life and at least twice daily thereafter.
- 8.12 Abnormal calf observations must be addressed and recorded, including:
- a) not feeding and/or drinking
 - b) signs of disease, injury or distress (including lameness, swellings, respiratory symptoms, scouring)
 - c) poor body condition, skin condition, growth rate and size, soiling
 - d) behaviour (including not active, responsive, sociable, calm, playing, or quiet)
 - e) abnormal oral behaviour (including soil eating, navel/ear sucking, urine drinking)
 - f) response to stockperson (not sociable and/or relaxed).
- 8.13 Calf observations must be increased during periods of adverse environmental conditions (including during hot weather), disease outbreak, and any other circumstance where calf health or welfare may be compromised.

Other management or husbandry procedures

- 8.14 Management or husbandry procedures that directly impact animal welfare and are not specified in the Standard must not be performed unless prior consent has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

9 ANIMAL HANDLING (on farm, during transport, at the abattoir)

9.01 Calves must be approached and handled:

- a) calmly and quietly
- b) with an awareness of the animal's natural flight zone
- c) in a manner that avoids pain, suffering and/or distress and avoids injuries and/or mortalities.

9.02 Calves must not be:

- a) lifted by the tail, head, ears, neck, skin or legs
- b) thrown or dropped
- c) hit or kicked
- d) dragged.

9.03 Where calves are to be lifted, they must be lifted by supporting the calf's full body weight.

9.04 Dogs, electric goads, or other harmful implements must not be used.

10 EUTHANASIA (on farm, during transport, at the abattoir)

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 10.01 Calves must be **euthanased** in a manner that avoids pain, suffering or distress.
- 10.02 Sick or injured calves and/or calves unable to walk ('downer calves') and not recovering or responding to treatment must be **promptly euthanased** in situ.
- 10.03 The permitted methods for **euthanasia** of individual calves are:
- a) firearm in the **frontal position**
 - b) penetrating captive bolt gun in the **frontal position**
 - c) firearm or penetrating captive bolt in the **poll position** (applicable only in emergencies where access to the **frontal position** is unavailable).
- 10.04 The **euthanasia** device must be designed, manufactured, maintained and operated to achieve immediate loss of consciousness and subsequent death without regaining consciousness.
- 10.05 Where the **euthanasia** method has not resulted in immediate loss of consciousness and subsequent death:
- a) the method must be immediately repeated or another permitted method must be immediately applied
 - b) equipment and/or method which resulted in failure must be checked and adjusted to correct any fault.
- 10.06 Calves must be checked **promptly** to ensure they are dead, evidenced by lack of corneal reflex, dilated pupils, relaxed jaw and limp tongue, and no rhythmic breathing.

11 LOADING, TRANSPORT AND UNLOADING

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

NOTE: This section applies to all calf loading, transport and unloading including that from the property of birth, to a **rearing facility**, a **finishing facility** or to an **abattoir**.

- 11.01 Only **transporters** that have been routinely assessed by RSPCA Certified and shown to comply with the Standard may be used to transport RSPCA Certified calves.
- 11.02 **Transporters** must provide information relevant to the Standard **promptly** to RSPCA Certified upon request.
- 11.03 **Transporters** must have emergency arrangements in place that include out of hours contacts and standard operating procedures for protecting calf welfare in the case of breakdowns, unexpected delays, accidents, and other circumstances that may affect the welfare of the calves during the **journey**.
- 11.04 Persons involved in the handling, loading, transport and unloading of calves must:
- a) meet on-farm biosecurity procedures
 - b) be aware of emergency arrangements (including in the case of an incident involving the transport vehicle).
- 11.05 Calves must not be transported to/from a saleyard, calf pick-up point, calf scales or other collection point not specifically permitted under the Standard.
- 11.06 An assessment of calves must be made before assembly for transport to confirm that they are fit for the intended **journey**.
- 11.07 Any calf rejected from transport as not fit for the intended **journey** must be **promptly** treated or immediately **euthanased**.
- 11.08 Where calves are moved from one facility to another on the same property, the floor of any transport vehicle used must be completely and evenly covered with clean, non-slip rubber matting of at least 1cm thickness and/or dry, clean bedding to a minimum average depth of 15cm.
- 11.09 Where calves are transported from their property of birth to a **rearing facility** (not located on the same property):
- a) calves must be ≥ 10 days old
 - b) calves must be fed within 4 hours prior to transport
 - c) calves must not be off feed and water for more than 12 hours
 - d) the floor of the transport vehicle must be completely and evenly covered with clean, non-slip rubber matting of at least 1cm thickness and/or dry, clean bedding to a minimum average depth of 15cm
 - e) the transport vehicle must provide protection from cold, heat, wind, and rain.
- 11.10 Where calves are transported from a **rearing facility** to a **finishing facility** (not located on the same property):
- a) calves must be ≥ 8 weeks old
 - b) calves must be fed within 4 hours prior transport
 - c) calves must not be off feed and water for more than 12 hours.
- 11.11 Where calves are transported from a **finishing facility** to an **abattoir**:
- a) calves must be fed within 4 hours prior to transport
 - b) calves must not be off feed for more than 24 hours
 - c) calves must not be off water for more than 12 hours.

- 11.12 Where cull calves are transported from a **rearing facility** or a **finishing facility** to an **abattoir**:
- calves must be >30 days old
 - calves must be fed within 4 hours prior to transport
 - calves must not be off feed for more than 24 hours
 - calves must not be off water for more than 12 hours
 - the floor of the transport vehicle must be completely and evenly covered with clean, non-slip rubber matting of at least 1cm thickness and/or dry, clean bedding to a minimum average depth of 15cm
 - for calves <8 weeks old, the transport vehicle must provide protection from cold, heat, wind, and rain.
- 11.13 Access roads and loading areas must be kept clear and be well-maintained to provide a level and compacted surface.
- 11.14 Where calves are moved to a **loading pen** prior to transport:
- stocking density** in the **loading pen** must provide sufficient floor space to allow all calves to lie down in a fully outstretched position ($0.047 \times \text{liveweight}^{0.67}$ m² per calf) at the same time (see Table 1)
 - calves must not spend more than 4 hours prior to commencement of loading in the **loading pen**.

Table 1: Maximum stocking density in the loading pen

Average weight	m ² /calf		Average weight	m ² /calf
30	0.46		240	1.85
40	0.56		260	1.95
50	0.65		280	2.05
60	0.73		300	2.15
70	0.81		320	2.24
80	0.89		340	2.33
90	0.96		360	2.43
100	1.03		380	2.52
120	1.16		400	2.60
140	1.29		420	2.69
160	1.41		440	2.77
180	1.52		460	2.86
200	1.64		480	2.94
220	1.74		500	3.02

- 11.15 Mixing of unfamiliar calves must be minimised at all stages of assembly, loading and unloading.
- 11.16 Where mixing is unavoidable, precautions must be taken to minimise aggression.
- 11.17 RSPCA Certified calves destined for slaughter must be clearly identified as such prior to leaving the **finishing facility**.

Loading/unloading

- 11.18 Calves must have access to water until immediately before loading commences.
- 11.19 Ramps, races, laneways and holding areas must be designed, constructed and maintained to:
- minimise right-angle bends
 - prevent sharp protrusions and sharp edges
 - provide non-slip flooring
 - reduce noise.

- 11.20 The surface of any area for holding calves prior to loading for transport must be **soft standing**.
- 11.21 Where used, ramps must be of a slope no greater than 20 degrees.
- 11.22 **Correction** must be taken to minimise the risk of heat or cold stress at loading/unloading, during transport and while the vehicle is stationary.
- 11.23 Once loaded, calves must be transported to their destination without off-loading and re-loading.
- 11.24 Multiple pick-ups of RSPCA Certified calves for transport to a common destination is permitted where:
- the most direct route is followed
 - maximum time off water is calculated from the time of loading the first calf.

Transport

- 11.25 The transport vehicle must be designed, constructed and maintained to:
- prevent sharp protrusions and sharp edges
 - provide non-slip flooring
 - reduce noise.
- 11.26 Calves must have sufficient headroom in the transport vehicle to travel in a natural standing position without touching overhead structures.
- 11.27 Where necessary, transport vehicles must provide sufficient dividers to prevent smothering of calves.
- 11.28 For calves <8 weeks old, transport vehicles must provide sufficient floor space to allow all calves to lie down in a fully outstretched position ($0.047 \times \text{liveweight}^{0.67} \text{m}^2$ per calf) at the same time (see Table 2).

Table 2: Maximum **stocking density** for calves <8 weeks old based on 12.25m x 2.4m deck

Average weight	m ² /calf	Number of calves per deck
30	0.46	64
40	0.56	52
50	0.65	45
60	0.73	40
70	0.81	36
80	0.89	33
90	0.96	30
100	1.03	28

- 11.29 For calves ≥ 8 weeks old, transport vehicles must provide sufficient floor space to allow all calves to lie down on their sternums ($0.019 \times \text{liveweight}^{0.67} \text{m}^2$) at the same time (see Table 3).

Table 3: Maximum **stocking density** for calves ≥ 8 weeks old based on 12.25m x 2.4m deck

Average weight	m ² /calf	Number of calves per deck		Average weight	m ² /calf	Number of calves per deck
120	0.47	62		320	0.91	32
140	0.52	56		340	0.94	31
160	0.57	51		360	0.98	29
180	0.62	47		380	1.02	28
200	0.66	44		400	1.05	27
220	0.70	41		420	1.09	27
240	0.75	39		440	1.12	26
260	0.79	37		460	1.16	25
280	0.83	35		480	1.19	24
300	0.87	33		500	1.22	24

- 11.30 Where transport mortalities and morbidities occur:

- these must be **promptly** reported to the consignor with any problems identified
- correction must be taken by the consignor to address problems identified
- problems identified and correction taken must be recorded.

Records

- 11.31 A record of loading and transport must be maintained, including:

- name and address of property of origin
- name of **transporter** responsible for calves at loading, during transport and at unloading
- time/date feed and water were withdrawn
- time/date loading commenced and concluded
- number of calves loaded
- time/date of departure from property of origin
- time/date of arrival at destination
- time/date unloading commenced and concluded
- transport mortalities.

12 SLAUGHTER

NOTE: Words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standard form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant standard and are defined in the glossary.

- 12.01 Only **abattoirs** that have been routinely assessed by RSPCA Certified and shown to comply with the Standard may be used to slaughter RSPCA Certified calves.
- 12.02 **Abattoirs** must provide information relevant to the Standard **promptly** to RSPCA Certified upon request.
- 12.03 The **abattoir** must nominate at least one designated person who is:
- a) responsible for the oversight of animal welfare at the facility
 - b) responsible for ensuring that animal-based welfare assessment and monitoring of animal handling and slaughter is part of the **abattoir** quality assurance system
 - c) **on site** when live animals are being unloaded, handled and slaughtered
 - d) knowledgeable in all facets of handling and slaughter
 - e) responsible for monitoring adherence to the Standard
 - f) responsible for ensuring that breaches of animal welfare legislation are reported to the relevant regulator and RSPCA Certified.
- 12.04 A Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system must be installed and operational to allow a clear, unobstructed view and recording of live animals at:
- a) unloading from transport vehicle into **lairage area**
 - b) **stunning** (including the raceway approaching the stunner)
 - c) **sticking** (bleeding).
- 12.05 Procedures for the use and review of CCTV footage must be in place and include at least the following:
- a) routine reviewing of footage at least once per shift covering a representative sample of calf sizes and shift times
 - b) availability for viewing (both stored and real-time footage) by RSPCA Certified
 - c) storage of footage for a minimum of 14 days
 - d) dates for routine monitoring with notes of any problems identified and the **corrective action** taken recorded.
- 12.06 **Stunning** and slaughter equipment must be:
- a) designed, manufactured, maintained and operated to provide effective restraint, **stunning** and killing
 - b) checked at least at the start of each shift
 - c) checked and adjusted to accommodate calf size if required.
- 12.07 A back-up stunning and slaughter method must be immediately available should the system fail.
- 12.08 Procedures must be in place to manage equipment failure and other breakdowns that may impact calf welfare and must:
- a) ensure that effectively **stunned** calves are processed or **euthanased**
 - b) ensure other calves are managed until the issue has been rectified
 - c) be followed accordingly.
- 12.09 Methods of **stunning** and/or killing not specified in the Standard must not be performed unless prior consent has been obtained from RSPCA Australia.

Lairage

12.10 Upon arrival at the **abattoir**, calves must be placed in a **lairage area** that:

- a) is well ventilated
- b) is appropriately lit to inspect calves
- c) provides non-slip flooring.

12.11 The **lairage area** must be:

- a) of sufficient size or number to avoid mixing of unfamiliar calves
- b) of sufficient size to allow all calves to lie down in a fully outstretched position ($0.047 \times \text{liveweight}^{0.67} \text{m}^2$ per calf) at the same time (see Table 4).

Table 4: Maximum stocking density in the lairage area

Average weight	m ² /calf		Average weight	m ² /calf
80	0.89		300	2.15
90	0.96		320	2.24
100	1.03		340	2.33
120	1.16		360	2.43
140	1.29		380	2.52
160	1.41		400	2.60
180	1.52		420	2.69
200	1.64		440	2.77
220	1.74		460	2.86
240	1.85		480	2.94
260	1.95		500	3.02
280	2.05			

12.12 Calves in the **lairage area** must be provided with clean water at all times.

12.13 Calves must be observed for pain, injury or disease as they walk off the truck and while in the **lairage area**.

12.14 Dates and times of calf checks, any problems identified and **correction** taken must be recorded.

12.15 Dead calves must be removed **promptly** and disposed of in a safe and hygienic manner.

12.16 Where calves in lairage are unable to be slaughtered within 24 hours of their last feed, they must be provided with palatable feed.

12.17 A record of lairage must be maintained, including:

- a) segregation of RSPCA Certified calves
- b) slaughter schedule
- c) lairage mortalities
- d) feed provision where required.

Handling

12.18 Races and laneways must be designed, constructed and maintained to:

- a) minimise right-angle bends
- b) prevent sharp protrusions and sharp edges
- c) avoid shadows, obstructions, moving objects and other distractions that may cause calves to balk
- d) provide non-slip flooring
- e) reduce noise.

12.19 Where used, ramps must be of a slope no greater than 20 degrees.

Restraint

12.20 Calves must be effectively restrained to allow for accurate placement of the **stunning** device.

12.21 Raceways leading up to the restraint device must have escape gates to allow for removal of calves if required.

12.22 Raceways leading up to the restraint device and the point of **stunning** must be well lit to encourage calves to move forward.

Stunning

12.23 Calves must be **stunned** prior to slaughter using one of the following methods.

- a) penetrating captive-bolt **stunning**
- b) head-to-body electrical **stunning**/killing.

12.24 Following **stunning**, the calf must be checked to ensure it is unconscious, evidenced by collapse of the animal, no rhythmic breathing, fixed/glazed eyes, no corneal reflex, relaxed jaw and limp tongue.

12.25 Where a calf is identified as ineffectively **stunned**:

- a) the calf must be re-**stunned** and bled out immediately
- b) operations must cease immediately
- c) no animals must be admitted to the **stunning** area
- d) operating procedures and equipment must be reviewed to ensure effective **stunning** at recommencement of operations.

12.26 Date and time of **stunning** and back-up **stunning** equipment checks, any problems identified and correction taken must be recorded.

Bleeding out

12.27 Effective **stunning** of each calf must be **promptly** followed by effective **sticking** of that calf.

12.28 Each calf must be checked to ensure they are dead (evidenced by absence of corneal reflex and reflex gasping breaths, dilated pupils, relaxed jaw and limp tongue, and no rhythmic breathing) before any dressing procedures begin.

Animal-based welfare assessment

12.29 The **abattoir** must have an internal animal-based welfare assessment system in place that:

- a) describes an objective and consistent daily protocol for measuring calf welfare outcomes, including percentage of animals slipping or falling, percentage of animals vocalising during handling or **stunning**, percentage of animals effectively **stunned** on first attempt, and percentage of animals regaining consciousness following **sticking**
- b) establishes and records **trigger levels** associated with these welfare outcomes
- c) ensures date/time and number of animals observed is recorded daily
- d) ensures correction is undertaken when a **trigger level** relating to handling, **stunning** and/or **sticking** of calves at the abattoir is reached
- e) records the nature of **correction** and date/time the **correction** was undertaken
- f) ensures **corrective action** is undertaken to avoid reoccurrence of a **trigger level** being reached.

Traceability

- 12.30 RSPCA Certified calves must be separated from other calves at all times.
- 12.31 All carcasses and products must be clearly identified as RSPCA Certified and checked for this identification before leaving the **abattoir**.
- 12.32 Supporting documentation and evidence of physical separation of RSPCA Certified calves, carcasses and products from other calves and products must be demonstrated.
- 12.33 A record of calves supplied to **Licensee** (in live weight kg and in calf numbers) must be maintained for each **batch** of finished calves.

GLOSSARY

NOTE: The glossary defines words/phrases highlighted in bold within a standards clause and which form part of the requirement(s) of the relevant clause.

abattoir	A facility where animals are slaughtered for the purpose of food for human consumption.
antimicrobial	An agent that kills or stops the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. Antimicrobials may be used therapeutically for treatment of a diagnosed disease or they may be used to prevent the occurrence or spread of disease. Ionophores and non-ionophore coccidiostats are a subcategory of antimicrobials used to kill or inhibit protozoal infections. For the purpose of the Standard, the term 'antimicrobial' excludes anthelmintics, antiseptics, disinfectants, essential oils, feed enzymes, prebiotics, probiotics, and organic acids.
automatic calf feeders	Feeding systems that enable individual calves to feed voluntarily and allow for automatic monitoring and recording of individual calf feed (milk or solid) intake.
batch	Calves of similar age/weight that progress through rearing/finishing and are then transported off farm as a group.
colostrum	A milky fluid containing antibodies produced by the pregnant cow prior to giving birth to her calf and which, at suckling on the day of birth, enables passive transfer of immunity (protection from infectious disease) to the new-born calf. Colostrum is the milk from the first milking immediately post calving.
concentrate	A solid feed ration formulated to meet the energy, protein and fibre requirements of the calf.
correction	Immediate action taken to address an identified problem.
corrective action	Action to eliminate the root cause of an identified problem and prevent its reoccurrence.
disbudding	Destruction of the free-floating horn buds before the horn attaches to the skull.
environmental enrichment	Stimuli that enable calves to meet their behavioural needs and provide opportunity to experience positive affective states. Environmental enrichment materials and/or objects include, but are not limited to cow brushes, chains, and balls.
euthanasia/euthanased	Humanely ending the life of an animal when it is in the interest of the animal's welfare and using a technique that avoids further pain, suffering or distress.
extreme weather	A weather event which can include heavy and/or prolonged rain, hail, snow, wind, or extremely high or low temperatures that may affect the welfare of the exposed calf (e.g. cause heat or cold stress in calves).
finishing facility	The place where the calf is raised from weaning until slaughter. The finishing facility may or may not be the same property as the rearing facility or the property of birth of the calf.
fortified milk	Whole milk to which milk replacer powder has been added to increase its solid concentration.
frontal position	The point midway across the calf's forehead where two imaginary lines each drawn from the centre of the base of the ear and the outside corner of the opposite eye intersect, or slightly above this point. The line of fire should be aimed into the skull towards the centre of the brain or spinal cord.

group	A collection of calves consisting of at least 2 animals.
group composition	A factor that takes into account calf weight, age and behaviour.
growth promotant	Any agent, typically an antimicrobial or hormone, which is administered to increase an animal's growth and production/feed efficiency. This may be achieved through an improved efficiency of feed conversion, weight gain, and/or growth rate. For the purpose of the Standard, the term 'growth promotant' excludes anthelmintics, antiseptics, disinfectants, essential oils, feed enzymes, prebiotics, probiotics, and organic acids.
journey	The loading, transport and unloading of calves for a period of time commencing when the first calf is loaded onto a transport vehicle until the last calf is unloaded at their destination.
lairage area	Designated area at the abattoir used for the purpose of holding calves prior to slaughter. The lairage area does not include paddocks, yards or other areas that may hold calves for a period longer than 24 hours.
Licensee	An entity that has entered into a Trademark Licence Agreement with RSPCA Australia and is permitted to use the RSPCA Certified logo on product sourced from RSPCA Certified Producers.
loading pen	An enclosed area in which calves are held prior to transport.
major reportable event	A circumstance that has a significant adverse impact on the welfare of the calves. A major reportable event includes sustained above-trend mortality rate(s) or unusual/unexpected incidences of high mortality; injury or disease including those resulting from endemic and/or exotic disease outbreaks; natural events; predator incursions; infrastructure or equipment failure; poor calf management; feed supply and/or formulation issues; transportation; calf handling; or other circumstance deemed reportable by company/producer standard operating procedures. In the case of a suspected exotic animal disease, the relevant state/territory government department must be notified.
milk	A fluid produced by the lactating cow, that is secreted through the mammary glands, and is constituted mainly of water, fat, proteins, lactose and minerals.
milk replacer	Powdered milk largely made from by-products of dairy processing (e.g. skim milk, whey protein) with the addition of non-dairy products (e.g. fat, vitamins, minerals) and with a similar chemical composition to whole milk. Milk replacer is 97% dry matter and water (or milk) must be added before feeding to the calf.
milk temperature	The degree or intensity of heat present in milk as it is fed to the calf. 'Consistent temperature' refers to milk that is fed to the calf at the same temperature at each feeding session each day until weaning.
paddock	An uncovered fenced area providing calves with continuous access to pasture, i.e. grass and/or other vegetation suitable for grazing.
pen	An enclosed area within a shed or shelter in which unweaned calves may be held.
poll position	The midway point on an imaginary line on the back of the skull (just behind the crown) joining the calf's ears at the level of the ear canal.
post-procedure care	Attention given to the calf to minimise the risk of pain, bleeding, damage to the wound, or infection following a painful procedure. Post-procedure care must include monitoring of the animal and administration of additional analgesics where signs of pain or discomfort are evident during the healing process. Further post-procedure care may include restriction of physical activity, use of antiseptic spray/cream, use of insecticide, dressing of wounds, provision of electrolytes, and general monitoring of the animal.
promptly	To make a priority and address with little or no delay.
rearing facility	The place where the calf is raised until weaning. The rearing facility may

or may not be on the same property as the finishing facility or the property of birth of the calf.

shed	A housing structure consisting of at least three walls and a roof that provides all calves with protection from cold, heat, wind, and rain. A shed must be of sufficient size to house a group of calves.
shelter	A housing structure consisting of at least a roof that provides all calves with partial protection from cold, heat, wind, and rain. A shelter must be of sufficient size to house a group of calves.
sick pen	An enclosed and identifiable area within a shed or shelter in which calves are held for treatment. Depending on calf age, may also include a paddock.
site	The location at which one or more facilities for raising or slaughtering calves is situated.
soft standing	A floor surface that is comfortable for calves to stand on, prevents slipping and falling, and avoids foot or leg issues. Soft-standing surfaces may include loose dirt, floors bedded with straw or wood shavings, sand, rubber matting, and concrete covered with rubber.
sticking/stuck	The severing of carotid arteries and jugular veins, or the blood vessels from which they arise, while the calf is still unconscious and in a manner that ensures the calf remains unconscious until death ensues from loss of blood. Also referred to as bleeding out.
stocking density	Space allowance expressed in m ² /calf calculated on the basis of the usable floor area available to the number of calves within the pen, shed, shelter or truck deck. Space allowance in the finishing facility (i.e. for calves ≥8 weeks old) is based on calves reaching a maximum live weight of 300kg or more at the end of the feeding period penned in static groups at the start of the feeding period.
stun/stunned/stunning	A procedure (or the act of carrying out a procedure) that has as its primary purpose to render an animal immediately unconscious and insensible to pain. A stun is effective where, following the stunning procedure, the animal is immediately unconscious and will not regain consciousness prior to sticking (bleeding) and further processing.
successful passive transfer	The transfer via colostrum of protective levels of antibodies (IgG) into the calf's blood stream such that the total protein value in serum is ≥55mg/ml when blood sampling is carried out between 24 hours and 7 days old.
thermal discomfort	Refers to heat or cold stress experienced by the calf resulting in calf core body temperatures outside of the normal range (38.5-39.5°C). Signs of heat stress include open mouth breathing, reluctance to move or lie down. Signs of cold stress include huddling, shivering, stiff muscles, cold and pale nostrils, and cold hooves.
transition milk	Milk from the second to eighth milking immediately post calving (the first milking produces colostrum).
transporter	The company responsible for a livestock transport vehicle and its driver.
trees	Trees are considered to provide all calves with partial protection from cold, heat, wind and rain as determined by the trees' height, density, number and location in relation to the paddock.
trigger level	A predetermined threshold which sets in motion a course of action to investigate and address the cause of a breach of that threshold.
usable area	Floor area within the pen, shed or shelter that is accessible to calves standing with normal posture. Usable area does not include any floor area that is occupied by feeders, drinkers or equipment that prevents access by calves to the floor area underneath.
veterinary advice	Recommendation(s) provided by a registered veterinarian with expertise in calf health.

- weaning** The process whereby the amount of milk provided to calves is gradually reduced over a number of days or weeks. A calf is considered 'weaned' when milk is no longer provided or milk is no longer the primary food source (e.g. the calf is eating mainly concentrates and/or a forage diet).
- whole milk** Milk from which no constituent has been removed or added.

END OF STANDARDS



PO Box 265
Deakin West ACT 2600

02 6282 8300

rspca@rspca.org.au
rspca.org.au

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