

Certification would ensure quality welfare during cattle transport

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Over 530,000 cattle are shipped to slaughter plants each week, making the transport of cattle a vitally important part of the beef and dairy industries. Almost all beef or dairy cattle are transported once during their life, and often they may be transported as many as 6 times. A new report details how a cattle transporter quality assurance program could help ensure the safe, humane, and expeditious shipping of cattle and benefit the industry significantly in terms of both economics and efficiency.

"Every stakeholder has an expectation for fostering animal well-being," Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein, lead author of the study, said.

"Producers, consignors, packers, and retailers alike want to improve animal treatment during transportation."

To determine the [best management practices](#) for cattle transport, researchers focused on issues facing the supply chain, previous research, expectations for transport, and current methods of education and training for cattle transporters and managers. Particular aspects were identified as important for animal welfare, namely loading density, transport duration, trailer design and ventilation, driving, handling quality, road and [environmental conditions](#), and fitness of the animals.

Ensuring the welfare of cattle is dependent upon best [management practices](#) being followed for all important aspects of transport. For instance, the trailer environment can be greatly affected by environmental conditions and stocking density, with positive or negative

outcomes likely as a result of extremes in both aspects. Likewise, transport times can vary up to 28 or 52 hours (in the United States and Canada, respectively), which can affect cattle well-being, as most trailers are not equipped to hold feed and water, leading to extended periods of fasting in cattle.

Identifying areas of concern and managing risk before and during transport is something drivers must be educated about in order to ensure the best outcome for cattle and managers. "A driver's cattle transporting experience is significant in the success of cattle transportation, which makes training and education important," Schwartzkopf-Genswein said.

In order to ensure best management practices are followed and cattle welfare is valued throughout the transportation process, the authors of the study recommend following the lead of the pork industry. Specifically, the majority of pork packers require drivers to show proof of Transporter Quality Assurance certification before entering any slaughter facility. To prove their commitment to good welfare, the beef and dairy industries need to use a practical and robust verification process similar to the pork industry.

More research on best practices is necessary to continue to improve cattle well-being. Research, further education, and a certification program can all go a long way toward making cattle [transport](#) beneficial for all actors, from drivers to producers and even the [cattle](#) themselves.

More information: Karen Schwartzkopf-Genswein et al, Symposium Paper: Transportation issues affecting cattle well-being and considerations for the future¹ Presented at the Cattle Transportation Symposium sponsored by the Beef Checkoff Program, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado, May 2015., *The Professional Animal Scientist* (2016). [DOI: 10.15232/pas.2016-01517](https://doi.org/10.15232/pas.2016-01517)

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