Dairy Australia

ADVERSE EVENTS

Cow Parking

Cow parking' refers to the relocation of milking cows from their farm of origin to an alternative farm where they continue to be milked but ownership is not transferred. This may occur under short term emergency arrangements to provide immediate relief from natural disasters, feed or water scarcity. Alternatively, it may be undertaken as a formal, long term business agreement.

Before drawing up a plan for cow parking, it would be appropriate to seek advice from a farm consultant and local veterinary service to assist with the milk quality, health, biosecurity and regulatory considerations that need to be incorporated into your farm plan.

Consider the following factors to minimise some of the risks associated with cow parking:

Milk Quality Considerations

Cow parking is high risk for introducing mastitis bacteria, particularly *Strep. agalactiae* and *Mycoplasma*, into your herd. For this reason, cow parking should be avoided if possible. During a crisis (e.g. bushfire, floods or other natural disaster) cow parking may be the only viable option to get cows milked. In these instances:

Short term

- Consider potential alternatives; can late-lactation cows be dried off early?
- Notify your milk processor if you intend to park cows.
- If possible, obtain a recent PCR test of the vat milk for both herds. A negative test for *Strep. agalactiae* and *Mycoplasma* is strongly advised.
- Obtain all treatment records and ensure any cows under treatment are clearly marked.
- Avoid mixing cows from multiple herds; milk herds separately and rinse or wash the plant between herds.
- Milk any clinical mastitis cases or sick animals last.
- Wear gloves and keep them clean. Change gloves or disinfect with alcohol if you identify a clinical mastitis case.
- Be liberal with teat disinfectant and ensure it covers all surfaces of the teat (especially the front of the fore teats). Post-milking teat disinfection is fundamental to avoid spreading contagious mastitis between cows.

Longer term

- Track new infection rates by milk recording for the next 12 months. Consult with a Countdown trained mastitis advisor if you have more than two cases per 100 cows per month.
- Conduct PCR sampling of the vat for both herds as soon as practicable and monitor over the next 12 months.
- Use blanket antibiotic dry cow therapy for all cows and heifers in both herds.

Other animal health considerations

Table 1 Diseases to consider when cow parking – what is the status of each herd?

Disease	Potential Impact	Assessing Risk	Further Information
Strep. agalactiae	*Strep. agalactiae* causes contagious mastitis. Infection is introduced when infected cows are milked with 'clean' cows.	Tests are available to assess disease presence in a herd. Consult with your veterinarian or Countdown trained mastitis advisor for advice.	Dairy Australia: 'Mastitis' **dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/animal-management/mastitis**
Mycoplasma	*Mycoplasma* can cause mastitis amongst other diseases. Mixing animals from affected and unaffected herds can lead to new infections.	Tests are available to assess disease presence in a herd. Consult with your veterinarian or Countdown trained mastitis advisor for advice.	Dairy Australia: '*Mycoplasma bovis* in Australia' **dairyaustralia.com.au/news-listing/mycoplasma-bovis-in-australia?id=B38A06C53C0746FAA8D53272476658C7**
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus ('BVDV' or 'Pestivirus)	Mixing unfamiliar cattle can lead to exposure of naïve animals to the virus. Potential impacts include reproductive losses, respiratory disease, immune suppression, diarrhoea and ill-thrift.	Tests are available to assess disease presence in a herd. Consult with your veterinarian or Countdown trained mastitis advisor for advice.	NSW DPI Prime Fact: 'Bovine pestivirus infection' **dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/beef-cattle/health-and-disease/viral-diseases/bovine-pestivirus-infection**
Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD)	Moving cattle to and from properties with different Johne's Disease Dairy Scores can affect the risk of infection and potentially impact your score.	Tests are available to assess disease presence in a herd. Consult with your veterinarian or Countdown trained mastitis advisor for advice.	Dairy Australia: 'Bovine Johne's Disease' **dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/animal-management/animal-health/bovine-johnes-disease**
Liver Fluke	Introducing infected cattle to a susceptible uninfected property can lead to the establishment of new infections. Infection causes liver damage, leading to ill thrift, jaundice, anaemia, liver failure and/or death.	Tests are available to assess disease presence in a herd. Consult with your veterinarian or Countdown trained mastitis advisor for advice.	NSW DPI Prime Fact: 'Liver fluke disease in sheep and cattle' **dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/114691/liver-fluke-disease-in-sheep-and-cattle.pdf**
Theileria	Moving cattle from a district where the parasite is not present to districts where *Theileria* is common can lead to infection. Infection can cause severe anaemia, abortions or deaths.	Consult with local vets at origin and destination properties to discuss level of risk.	NSW DPI Fact Sheet: 'Bovine anaemia caused by *Theileria orientalis* group' **dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/info-vets/theileria**

Cow parking is stressful for cows which may increase their risk of other animal health problems. Transport, milking through an unfamiliar shed, mixing herds (where unavoidable) and disease transmission adds to the stress of natural disasters and feed shortages, increasing the risk to cows in both herds. Table 1 provides a summary of some of the most common diseases to watch out for.

Vaccinations

Where possible, consider the use of vaccines to help mitigate animal health risks. Some of the diseases to consider vaccinating against include Leptospirosis, BVDV, Vibriosis, Botulism, Bovine Respiratory Disease and Johne's Disease. These decisions should be made in consultation with a veterinarian.

Traceability and records

It is vital that all livestock movements comply with the relevant legislation. This includes recording movements on the NLIS database and completing vendor declarations or waybills. Also consider completing a National Cattle Health Declaration.

Ensuring cows are adequately identified with management tags before departure will assist management. It is also important that all treatment records are forwarded with the cows to avoid risks of antibiotic residues.

Agreements

Cow parking arrangements may vary in their terms, duration and level of formality. Considerations include: who receives milk income, who pays for transport, and who pays for other expenses such as feed, power and treatments. Also consider ongoing responsibilities for calf rearing, reproduction, sales, removals and deaths. It is important that the terms of the arrangement are formally documented and clear to both parties from the outset to avoid mismatched expectations in the future.

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