



Dairy  
Australia

Your Levy at Work

A photograph of several young calves (bobby calves) in a barn. The calves are of various colors, including black and white, brown and white, and solid black. They are standing on a bed of straw. The background shows a corrugated metal wall. The image is partially obscured by a white curved graphic element in the top right corner.

# Caring for bobby calves

before and during transport

This national guide was developed by Dairy Australia with the endorsement of the following organisations:

- › Australian Dairy Farmers
- › Australian Meat Industry Council
- › Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association
- › Australian Livestock Markets Association
- › Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association
- › United Dairy Farmers of Victoria
- › Livestock Saleyards Association of Victoria.

**and in collaboration with:**

- › Animal Health Australia
- › Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- › Cattle Council of Australia
- › Meat & Livestock Australia
- › State and Territory Departments of Primary Industry/Agriculture.

**Disclaimer**

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## About this guide

Taking good care of bobby calves is a high priority across the Australian bobby calf industry. All people involved in the care and management of bobby calves, whether on the farm, during transport, at saleyards or at processing works have an important role to play in ensuring their welfare.

The information in this guide will assist you in providing good calf care that complies with the requirements of the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock* (known as the Land Transport Standards) that includes standards and guidelines specifically for bobby calves.



### What is a bobby calf?

A bobby calf is defined in the Land Transport Standards as a calf not accompanied by its mother, less than 30 days old, weighing less than 80kg live weight.

# Animal welfare legislation in Australia

Each state and territory has regulated animal welfare standards requiring the responsible care and management of bobby calves, including for transportation.

New national standards that cover the preparation for and transport of livestock have now been implemented into state legislation (Land Transport Standards). **Failure to comply with one or more standards will be an offence and may lead to an infringement or court penalty.**

For information on regulations for the transport of animals, contact the relevant authority in your state or territory.

Where relevant, this guide also includes industry agreed standards for the management and handling of bobby calves including the maximum time off feed for calves destined for sale or slaughter.



**NEW LAWS**  
for transporting livestock

What you need to know before the journey

The new national standards have been developed by industry, welfare organisations and government and will be regulated by State and Territory governments

These standards and guidelines cover the transport of livestock by road and rail, and by livestock transport vehicle aboard a ship.

They apply to the following species in Australia —

- alpacas
- goats
- poultry:
- buffalo
- horses
- meat chickens
- pheasants
- camels
- ostrich
- layers
- guinea fow
- cattle
- pigs
- turkeys
- partridge
- deer
- sheep
- ducks
- quail
- emu
- geese
- pigeons.

[www.livestockwelfarestandards.nct.au](http://www.livestockwelfarestandards.nct.au)

# What are the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines – Land Transport of Livestock?

The new Land Transport Standards provide for the welfare of animals in your care that are transported.

**Standards are the legal requirements for livestock welfare and use the word 'must'.**

The standards detail the requirements of livestock management practices and tasks and apply to all people involved in the preparation for, and transport of, livestock. This includes the consignor, transporter and receiver of livestock and will often also include agents and staff at saleyards and livestock processing plants (abattoirs).

**Guidelines are recommended practices to help people achieve desirable welfare outcomes.** Guidelines use the word 'should' and are designed to complement the standards.

More information on these standards is available at [livestockwelfarestandards.net.au](https://livestockwelfarestandards.net.au)

**Failure to comply with one or more standards will be an offence and may lead to an infringement or court penalty.**

# Information for farmers

The person who consigns the calves on-farm (usually the farmer) is responsible for preparing and selecting bobby calves, assessing whether they are fit for the intended journey, and making sure that they are fed appropriately before loading on-farm.

## On-farm management

Bobby calves need to be given the same standard of care as every other calf on the farm. Good on-farm management is essential as calves that are well cared for prior to transportation are more likely to be fit on arrival.

Bobby calves must:

- › be fed colostrum (2–4 litres/calf) within the first 24 hours of life
- › be fed daily with adequate milk or milk replacer and have free access to water at all times
- › have protection from excess heat, sun, wind and rain, and are kept clean and dry

with bedding. Exposed concrete, bare earth and mud floors are not acceptable.

- › be handled gently at all times. Do not throw, hit, drop or drag a calf at any time. Bobby calves must not be moved using dogs or electric prodders.

Detailed information on all aspects of calf management can be found in the Dairy Australia publication Rearing Healthy Calves – How to raise calves that thrive.

**Ensure calves are prepared appropriately on-farm before transport.**

## Selecting calves that are fit for transport

Both the person selling the calf (the consignor) AND the transporter share a responsibility for the selection and transport of calves that are fit for sale.

- › The consignor must only supply calves that are fit for the intended journey, **AND**
- › The transporter must only load, or permit to be loaded, calves that are fit for the intended journey.

Before selecting calves for transport, you need to consider both their age and their fitness for the intended journey. Bobby calves must not be consigned across Bass Strait. If an animal is not fit for the intended journey, appropriate arrangements for its care, treatment or humane euthanasia must be made.



If the calf is unfit to transport, do not supply it.

## Information for farmers (continued)

### Age

All calves consigned to a saleyard or to a processor must be at least five days old. Bobby calves that are born prematurely (including induced calves) must be at an equivalent stage of fitness to normal full-term calves when transported.

Farmers need to have a system in place to verify the age of calves assessed as fit for transport to a saleyard or processor.

Calves **less than five days old must not** be sold in a saleyard or consigned to a processor. These calves are only allowed to be transported directly to a calf-rearing facility and **must**:

- › be fed a liquid feed within six hours before loading
- › be provided with thick bedding and room to lie down
- › be protected from cold and heat
- › not be transported for longer than six hours.

Calves less than five days old can only be transported for rearing.

## How do I know if the calves are fit for transport?

Calves between five and 30 days old travelling without mothers **MUST**:

- › have been adequately fed milk or milk replacer on the farm within six hours of transport
- › have an auditable and accessible record that identifies the date and time that they were last fed (unless the journey is between rearing properties and is less than six hours duration).

Note: Your calf buyer may record the time of collection of calves during NLIS scanning. If so, you can use these receipts for calf pick-ups or obtain details from calf processors to match with your (the consigning farm) feeding schedules to satisfy requirements for an auditable record system.

If in doubt, leave it out.

In addition to being a minimum five days of age before transport, the following signs will indicate if a calf is fit for transport:

- › **Healthy:** Must be alert with no visible disease, deformity, disability, injury or blindness
- › **Strong:** Must be able to bear weight on all four limbs and to rise from a lying position
- › **Hooves:** Should be firm and worn flat, and that are not bulbous or round with soft unworn tissue
- › **Navel:** Should be dry and wrinkled, withered and shrivelled and not pink or red coloured, raw or fleshy.

Calves that have received antibiotic treatments or consumed milk containing antibiotics **MUST NOT** be consigned to processors within the meat withholding period for that antibiotic.

# Information for transporters

The transporter (truck driver) is responsible for the welfare of calves during their journey. This includes a final inspection to determine if they are fit for the intended journey, controlling the loading density, during loading, on the road and during unloading.

## Handling

- › Calves must be handled gently and with patience at all times. Do not throw, hit, drop or drag a calf at any time.
- › Calves must not be lifted by only the head, ears, neck, tail, hair or a single leg.
- › Calves must not be moved with dogs or electric prodders.
- › Calves should be unloaded with care as they are easily fatigued and may not follow other animals. Ramps used for calves should not have a slope of more than 12 degrees.
- › Calves should not be sent to saleyards that do not have holding facilities suitable for calves.



**Electric prodders must never be used on bobby calves.**

## Time on transport

- › Calves must be delivered in less than 18 hours from last feed and spend no more than 12 hours on transport.
- › Calves should be transported for the shortest time possible. Direct marketing should be used where possible.
- › Transporters should record when calves are picked up.



If the calf is unfit to transport, do not load it.

## Information for transporters (continued)

### Comfort

- › Calves must be protected from heat and cold while being transported, and should be protected from excess sun, wind and rain.
- › All calves must have sufficient space in the livestock crate to lie down on their sternums.
- › Vehicles must be maintained and operated to minimise the risk to welfare of the calves.
- › The vehicle should have an enclosed front but still provide effective ventilation. During cold weather, additional actions should be taken to protect calves from cold stress and wind chill during transport.



Ensure calves are cared for during the journey.

# Information for saleyard operators, buyers and agents

The receiver of the calves after unloading (at a saleyard or scales) and the buyer post sale is responsible for providing adequate facilities and appropriate arrangements for their feeding and care in case of delay or emergency.

## Handling

- › Calves must be handled gently at all times. Do not throw, hit, drop or drag a calf at any time.
- › Calves must not be moved with dogs or electric prodders.
- › Calves should be unloaded with care as they are easily fatigued and may not follow other animals. Ramps used for calves should not have a slope of more than 12 degrees.

## Contingency planning

- › Appropriate arrangements should be in place for the feed, water and care of calves in case of delay or emergency.

Calves must be handled with care.

# Information for saleyard operators, buyers and agents (continued)

## Comfort

- › Calves must be protected from cold and heat.
- › Holding facilities must be suitable for calves.

## Transport considerations for buyers

- › The time calves are held at saleyards must be factored into total journey time to ensure calves **are delivered** to their final destination in less than 18 hours from last feed.



Ensure calves are cared for at saleyards.

# Information for processors

The receiver of the calves (at a processor or calf-rearing facility) after unloading is responsible for providing adequate facilities and appropriate arrangements for their feeding and care in case of delay or emergency.

## Handling

- › Calves must be handled gently at all times. Do not throw, hit, drop or drag a calf at any time.
- › Calves must not be moved with dogs or electric prodders.
- › Calves should be processed as soon as possible after arrival at a processor, with priority given to calves travelling over the longest distances or held overnight.

## Feed and water

- › Calves must be slaughtered or fed within 30 hours from their last feed.
- › Water must be freely available.

## Comfort

- › Calves must be protected from cold and heat and taken care of in cases of delay or emergency.

**Ensure calves are processed as soon as possible.**

# Humane euthanasia of calves

Calves can become sick or injured at any stage of the journey. If this happens calves must be treated or humanely euthanased as soon as possible to alleviate pain and suffering.

Humane euthanasia should only be carried out by someone competent or under the supervision of a competent person.

The recommended methods of humane euthanasia are firearm or captive bolt.

Blunt trauma must only be used on calves that are less than 24 hours old and should only be used where the other recommended options are not available.

It is important to confirm death or follow up by another technique while the animal is unconscious to ensure death.

If you have any concerns about an animal please contact either your vet, your state department animal health officer or a general inspector from the RSPCA.

**Sick or injured calves must be treated or humanely euthanased as soon as possible.**

## Summary

Responsibility for the welfare of bobby calves is shared along the entire supply chain. Farmers, calf buyers, agents, saleyard operators, transporters and meat processors are all required to ensure the welfare of bobby calves under their care.

**Farmers** must have records of calf pick up time and feeding and must ensure bobby calves transported for sale or slaughter:

- › are at least five days old (unless consigned direct to a calf rearing farm)
- › are fit and healthy
- › have been adequately fed within six hours of transport
- › are free from chemical residues.



## Summary (continued)

**Transporters** must ensure bobby calves are:

- › fit for the journey
- › protected from cold and heat
- › handled appropriately during loading and unloading
- › transported for the minimum time possible, with no more than 12 hours spent on transport
- › **Saleyard operators, buyers and agents** must ensure bobby calves are:
- › handled appropriately protected from cold and heat and taken care of in cases of delay or emergency.

**Meat processors** (receivers) must ensure bobby calves are:

- › slaughtered as soon as possible and within 30 hours of last feed
- › fed if not slaughtered within 30 hours of last feed
- › protected from cold and heat and taken care of in cases of delay or emergency.

## Further information

For information on the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards for the Land Transport of Livestock*, visit [livestockwelfarestandards.net.au](http://livestockwelfarestandards.net.au). Or contact the department of primary industries in your state/territory:

### ACT

Parks, Conservation  
and Lands

**132 281**

### NSW

Department of  
Primary Industries

**1800 808 095**

### NT

Department of Resources  
– Primary Industry

**1300 720 386**

### QLD

Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

**132 523**

### SA

Department of Primary  
Industries and Regions SA

**08 8207 7900**

### TAS

Department of Primary  
Industries, Parks Water  
and Environment

**1300 368 550**

### VIC

Department of Economic  
Development, Jobs,  
Transport and Resources

**136 186**

### WA

Department of Agriculture  
and Food

**08 9366 2311**

For information  
about Dairy Australia's  
animal health and  
welfare program, visit  
[dairyaustralia.com.au](http://dairyaustralia.com.au)



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Your Levy at Work

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