



# 2023 Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle

## List of Requirements Comparison between 2023 and 2009

2023 Code Requirements	Comparison to 2009 Code
<b>1. Training and Responsibilities</b>	
Personnel must be aware of this Code of Practice and must follow the Requirements of this Code of Practice.	New
Personnel must have the competence to carry out the procedures that they are responsible for.	New (Adjusted from: Personnel must be knowledgeable in cattle behaviour and must only use low-stress handling techniques.)
Managers must supervise personnel and must retrain them if practices begin to fall below standards of care.	New
<b>2. Facilities and Housing</b>	
<b>2.1 Design and Maintenance of Facilities</b>	
Housing systems, including flooring and other components of housing, must be maintained in good condition to minimize lameness and injury.	New
Electrified crowd gates must not be used.	New
<b>2.2 Housing Systems</b>	
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<b>2.2.1 Calves (Pre-Weaning)</b>	
For all calf housing systems: Housing must allow calves to easily stand up, lie down, turn completely around, stand fully upright (without touching the top of the enclosure), adopt sternal and lateral resting postures, groom themselves, and have visual contact with other cattle.	Revised (Addition of grooming, not touching the top, turn COMPLETELY around, resting postures)
The bedded area for group-housed calves must be large enough to allow all calves to rest comfortably at the same time.	Same
Where tethering of calves is permitted, the tether must include a collar.	New
For indoor calf housing:	

2023 Code Requirements	Comparison to 2009 Code
<p>Calves must not be tethered as part of normal indoor housing.</p> <p>Producers raising calves individually must develop a plan to transition to pair/group housing methods, in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified advisor.</p> <p>Effective April 1, 2031, calves that are healthy, thriving, and compatible must be housed in pairs or groups by 4 weeks of age.<sup>1</sup></p> <p><u>Hutches and other outdoor housing:</u></p> <p>Calves housed outdoors, including in hutches, must have physical contact with another calf unless they need to be separated for health reasons or they need to be protected from inclement weather.</p> <p>Calves may be tethered only if housed in hutches that provide access to an area outside the hutch.</p>	<p>New</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p>
<b>2.2.2 Heifers</b>	
<p>Housing must allow heifers to easily stand up, lie down, adopt normal resting postures, groom themselves, and have visual and physical contact with other cattle.</p>	<p>Revised (addition of: <i>grooming and physical contact</i>)</p>
<b>2.2.3 Lactating and Dry Cows</b>	
<p>Housing must allow lactating and dry cows to easily stand up, lie down, adopt normal resting postures, groom themselves, and have visual and physical contact with other cattle.</p> <p>Effective April 1, 2027, cows must not be tethered continuously throughout their entire production cycle (calving to calving)—they must be provided sufficient regular opportunity for freedom of movement to promote good welfare.</p> <p>Newly built barns must allow daily, untethered freedom of movement and social interactions year-round.</p>	<p>Revised (addition of: <i>grooming and physical contact</i>)</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p>
<b>2.2.4 Breeding Bulls</b>	
<p>Housing must allow breeding bulls to easily stand up, lie down, adopt normal resting postures, groom themselves, turn around, and mount safely.</p>	<p>Revised (addition of: <i>grooming</i>)</p>
<b>2.3 Facilities for Special Needs</b>	
<p>Special needs facilities must include a resting surface with bedding that provides comfort, insulation, dryness, and traction.</p>	<p>Revised (addition of <i>specific reference to bedding</i>)</p>
<b>2.3.1 Calving Areas</b>	

2023 Code Requirements	Comparison to 2009 Code
Calving areas, whether for group or individual calving, must provide the cow and calf an area that is clean, safe, and separated from the lactating herd, and that provides enough space for the cow to be assisted.	New
Effective April 1, 2029, cattle on all farms must calve in loose housed maternity pens, yards, or pastures that permit them to turn around.	New
Newly built barns must allow cows to calve in loose housed maternity pens, yards, or pastures that permits them to turn around.	New
<b>2.3.2 Post-Calving (Fresh Cows)</b>	
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<b>2.3.3 Areas for Sick, Injured, or Lamé Cattle</b>	
Areas must be available to segregate, care for, and treat cattle that are sick, injured, or lame.	Revised (addition of: <i>lame and care for</i> )
<b>2.4 Ventilation, Temperature, and Relative Humidity</b>	
Facilities, including hutches, must provide cattle with fresh air; prevent the build-up of harmful gases, dust, and moisture; and minimize the risk of heat and cold stress.	New
<b>2.5 Stall Design</b>	
Stalls and their components must be compatible with the size of the cattle, minimize lameness and injury, and allow cattle to rest comfortably and rise and lie down with ease.	Revised (added detail on cattle size and rest)
Tethers or other head restraints must allow cattle to rest in a head back position; stanchions are not permitted.	New
<b>2.5.1 Electric Trainers</b>	
Electric trainers must only be used when needed to train or retrain individual cattle.	New
Electric trainers must be safe, secure, adjustable, and positioned to enable normal eating, standing, and lying behaviour.	Revised (added detail on adjustable, behaviour, safety)
<b>2.6 Space Allowances</b>	
Stocking density must not exceed 1.2 cows per stall in free stall systems.	Same
Effective April 1, 2027, stocking density must not normally exceed 1.1 cow per stall. <sup>2</sup>	New
Effective April 1, 2031, stocking density must not normally exceed 1 cow per stall. <sup>2</sup>	New
Resting areas in group pens must provide at least 9.3 m <sup>2</sup> (100 ft <sup>2</sup> ) per Holstein cow. <sup>3</sup>	Reduced ( <i>from 120ft<sup>2</sup></i> )
<b>2.7 Feeding Area</b>	
Provide adequate linear feed bunk space to meet the animals' nutritional needs.	Same
<b>2.8 Bedding Management</b>	

2023 Code Requirements	Comparison to 2009 Code
Cattle must have a resting surface with bedding that provides comfort, insulation, dryness, and traction.	Revised (more direct requirement for bedding)
<b>2.9 Milking Systems</b>	
Milking equipment must be properly maintained and calibrated.	Simplified (removed expectation for 12 mo inspection)
<b>2.10 Pasture and Exercise Yards</b>	
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<b>2.11 Emergencies and Safety</b>	
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<b>3. Feed and Water</b>	
<b>3.1 Body Condition Scoring</b>	
Corrective action must be taken for cattle at a body condition score of 2 or lower (refer to Appendix B – Body Condition Scoring Charts).	Same
<b>3.2 Nutrition and Feeding Management for Cattle</b>	
Cattle must have daily access to a palatable ration that meets their nutritional needs, promotes satiety, and maintains body condition, health, and vigour.	Revised (added detail on satiety and BCS)
<b>3.2.1 Additional Considerations for Heifers</b>	
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<b>3.2.2 Additional Considerations for Transition Cows</b>	
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<b>3.3 Nutrition and Feeding Management for Calves</b>	
Calves must receive a diet that promotes satiety and maintains health, growth, and vigour.	Revised ( <i>added detail on satiety</i> )
Newborn calves must be offered a minimum total daily intake of 15% birth weight (6 L for Holsteins) and from 7–28 days of age must be offered a minimum total daily intake of 20% birth weight (8 L for Holsteins) in milk/milk replacer. <sup>4</sup>	Revised ( <i>added % BW</i> )
The quantity of milk/milk replacer offered to calves at risk of cold stress must be increased.	Revised ( <i>added detail</i> )
<b>3.3.1 Additional Considerations for Weaning</b>	
Calves must be gradually weaned over a period of at least 5 days, and they must be at least 8 weeks old before weaning is completed (44, 48).	New
<b>3.4 Pasture Feeding</b>	
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<b>3.5 Water</b>	
Watering systems must be clean, and cattle must have access to palatable, clean water in quantities to maintain normal hydration and health, taking into consideration factors such as environmental temperature and diet.	Revised (added detail)
Neither ice nor snow are suitable sources of water.	New

<b>4. Husbandry Practices</b>	
<b>4.1 Handling, Moving, and Restraining Cattle</b>	
Personnel must be knowledgeable in cattle behaviour and must only use low-stress techniques in the routine handling of cattle.	Revised
Electric prods must not be used for routine handling—they must only be used in extreme situations, such as when an animal’s safety is at risk.	Simplified
Abusive handling is unacceptable.	New
When restraint is necessary the safest, least stressful restraint must be used.	New
<b>4.1.1 Additional Considerations when Moving or Handling Down Cattle</b>	
Apparatus that are designed to lift, move, and support down cattle must be used according to the manufacturer’s specifications.	New
Hip lifters must only be used to lift an animal for a short duration to help an animal stand on its own—they must never be used to move down cattle.	New
Down cattle must not be moved by hoisting by chain, dragging, or lifting without adequate body support.	New
Personnel must not repeatedly encourage a down animal to rise if it has demonstrated it cannot get up or move.	New
If an electric prod is used, it must be used in consultation with a veterinarian and only applied on the rear flank and upper rear leg (twice at maximum) when absolutely necessary to determine if the animal can rise or if euthanasia needs to be considered.*	New
<small>*In consultation with a veterinarian refers to a one-time consultation or periodic consultations as part of a veterinarian-client-patient relationship. Use of this term is not intended to imply that a consultation with a veterinarian is needed each time the procedure or treatment is carried out.</small>	
<b>4.2 Surgical and Husbandry Procedures</b>	
Surgical procedures must be performed by competent personnel following a method developed in consultation with a veterinarian, including the use of appropriate equipment, pain control, and procedures to minimize the risk of infection and other complications (54, 55).	New
<b>4.2.1 Animal Identification</b>	
Cattle must not be branded.	New
<b>4.2.2 Disbudding and Dehorning</b>	
Horn bud removal must be done by 2 months of age (41, 56, 58). Only in exceptional circumstances can individual cattle be dehorned after 2 months of age.	New
When removing buds or horns, local anesthesia and systemic analgesia must be provided (4, 55, 58).	Revised (added detail on both pain control methods)
	New

Banding is not an acceptable method of dehorning (59). If larger horns must be removed, bleeding must be controlled.	Revised (added detail: <i>larger horns</i> )
<b>4.2.3 Castration</b>	
If castrating cattle, the procedure must be done as early as possible using local anesthesia and systemic analgesia (4, 55, 60).	Revised (added detail on both pain control methods)
<b>4.2.4 Tail Injuries</b>	
Cattle must not be tail docked unless medically necessary for an individual animal, and the procedure must be done using pain control (55).	Revised (added detail on pain control)
<b>4.2.5 Extra Teat Removal</b>	
If removing extra teats, they must be removed as early as possible using pain control (55).	Revised (added detail on pain control)
<b>4.3 Udder Hair Removal</b>	
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<b>4.4 Breeding</b>	
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<b>4.5 Milking</b>	
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<b>4.6 Dry-Off Management</b>	
Cows must not be dried off by restricting water.	New
<b>5. Cattle Health</b>	
<b>5.1 Herd Health Management</b>	
Producers must have a veterinarian-client-patient relationship.  Disease events, treatments, and mortalities (including cause, if known) must be recorded and records must be kept for at least 3 years to track trends in animal health.  Health records must be reviewed with a veterinarian as part of ongoing herd health and disease prevention planning.	Same  New  New
<b>5.1.1 Cattle Cleanliness</b>	
Cattle must be kept clean to minimize disease, maintain udder and hoof health, and promote cattle comfort.	Revised (specific details on cow health and comfort)
<b>5.1.2 Pest Control</b>	
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<b>5.2 Genetics</b>	
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<b>5.3 Caring for Sick, Injured, or Compromised Animals</b>	
Personnel must be able to detect signs of injury, lameness (including abnormalities in gait or mobility), and disease.	New

<p>Sick, injured, lame, or suffering cattle must receive prompt care appropriate to their condition (including pain control where necessary), and they must be monitored at least twice a day.</p> <p>Down cattle must have easy access to feed and water and protection from predators, herd mates, and extreme weather (cold, rainfall, direct sunlight), and they must be provided non-slip footing that supports recovery.</p> <p>Lactating cows that are severely lame or down that require milking (to prevent mammary engorgement) must be milked where they are located.</p>	<p>Revised (added detail on monitoring)</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p>
<p><b>5.4 Calving Management</b></p>	
<p>Steps must be taken to ensure cattle calve in a designated calving area.</p> <p>Cattle close to calving must be monitored daily, at intervals suitable to individual cattle needs, including for risk factors of dystocia.</p>	<p>New</p> <p>New</p>
<p><b>5.5 Calf Health</b></p>	
<p>If mortality in female calves from 2 days of age exceeds 10%, corrective actions must be implemented to improve calving management and calf health in consultation with a veterinarian or other qualified advisor (77).</p>	<p>New</p>
<p><b>5.5.1 Colostrum</b></p>	
<p>Male and female calves must receive at least 4 liters of good quality colostrum within 12 hours of birth, with the first meal occurring as soon as possible, and no later than 6 hours after birth (41).</p>	<p>New</p>
<p><b>5.6 Preventing and Treating Mastitis</b></p>	
<p>Systemic analgesia must be included in the treatment of cows with severe acute clinical mastitis (4).</p>	<p>New</p>
<p><b>5.7 Promoting Optimal Foot and Leg Health</b></p>	
<p>Personnel must regularly observe cattle for signs of lameness or leg injuries, to diagnose and treat them quickly.</p> <p>To minimize lameness and leg injuries, producers must set thresholds for the occurrence of lameness and leg injuries and take corrective actions when the thresholds are exceeded.</p>	<p>New</p> <p>New</p>
<p><b>5.7.1 Hoof Trimming</b></p>	
<p>Feet and claws must be inspected and hooves trimmed as required to promote a normal gait and minimize lameness.</p> <p>Infectious hoof lesions must be treated to control the infection.</p> <p>Therapeutic hoof trimming must include strategies to relieve pain and pressure on the injured area and promote healing.</p>	<p>New</p> <p>New</p> <p>New</p>

Pain control must be included in the treatment of cattle that receive an invasive hoof trim.	New
<b>6. Preparations for Transportation</b>	
<b>6.1 Pre-Transport Decision Making</b>	
<b>6.1.1 Fitness for Transport (General and Cull Cows)</b>	
Every animal's fitness for transport must be assessed before they are loaded taking into consideration their condition and risk factors that may impact the animal's capacity to withstand loading, transport, and unloading (3).	New
Unfit animals must not be transported except for veterinary care on the advice of a veterinarian and with special provisions (refer to the regulatory guidance in Appendix F – Transport Decision Tree) (3).	New
Compromised animals must only be transported with special provisions and directly to the nearest suitable place where they can receive care or be promptly slaughtered (not through an auction or assembly yard; refer to the regulatory guidance in Appendix F – Transport Decision Tree) (3).	New
<b>6.1.2 Additional Considerations for Calves</b>	
Calves must only be shipped if they are free from signs of fever or disease and have a healed, uninfected navel (refer to other regulatory guidance in Appendix F – Transport Decision Tree).	New
Calves that are 8 days of age or less must only be transported with special provisions and directly to their final destination (not through an auction or assembly yard) (3).	New
<b>6.1.3 Preparing Cattle for Transportation</b>	
When shipping a lactating cow, steps must be taken to prevent the risk of udder engorgement.	New
<b>6.1.4 Arranging Transportation</b>	
Personnel involved in loading, unloading, or transporting cattle must have the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct these activities in compliance with the Health of Animals Regulations (3).	New
<b>6.2 Loading and Unloading</b>	
Ramps, gangways, chutes, and steps must be designed, constructed, maintained, and used in a way that prevents the animal from tripping, slipping, or falling (3).	New
The slope of ramps used to load or unload animals onto/from the conveyance must not exceed 25 degrees (3).	New
Cattle that are incompatible must be segregated (3).	New



