



more than meat

**Kepak Group Beef Animal Welfare Policy**

# HIGHEST LEVELS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

## INTRODUCTION

Kepak Group is committed to providing the highest levels of quality and animal welfare. At Kepak Group, we work with many beef farmers across Ireland to source the highest quality, best tasting beef for our customer base. Animal welfare on our supplier farms is paramount and better management and care for livestock can improve livestock productivity and food quality, which benefits all parties in the supply chain.

Irish Beef production systems are grass based and extensive by nature. Nonetheless, there are aspects of beef production that have the potential to cause distress, pain or injury if not managed correctly.



# IT IS OUR POLICY



To insist that high standards of farm animal welfare are met and maintained at all stages of the animals life – on the farm, during transportation and in our lairages and abattoirs, to encourage best practice amongst our farmer suppliers and Kepak employees.



To only work with dedicated suppliers who share our commitments on animal welfare.



Day to day management of the animal welfare policy and its implementation is the responsibility of our animal welfare working group and our procurement team.





# OUR ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARD

- All cattle sourced by Kepak will be produced according to the Kepak Group livestock specifications and Codes of Practice that include specific animal welfare requirements.
- We do not permit the use of animal welfare or husbandry systems that are illegal
- We ensure all live animal transportation is kept to a minimum and long distances are avoided. Maximum transport time from farm to abattoir is 8 hours.
- No Cattle will be supplied to Kepak from cloned animals or 1st generation progeny of cloned animals.
- There must be a trained welfare officer on duty in abattoirs when animals are on site or being killed who is responsible for ensuring good animal welfare and an effective slaughter process.
- The use of Quinolones and 3rd and 4th generation cephalosporins are not desired for use in animals destined for Kepak. Suppliers should have an understanding of which brands of treatments contain these products on farm to minimise their use.
- We aim to source as many cattle as possible from Bord Bia Quality Assured Farms. In 2015 94.2% of cattle were sourced from Bord Bia QA farms. (National average is 87%)

**Our aim is to reach 95% of our supply base in 2016.**

## LIVESTOCK STANDARDS

### Five Freedoms

All farms should follow the 5 freedoms concept that underpins animal welfare practices at farm level:

- 1 Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- 2 Freedom from discomfort
- 3 Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- 4 Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour
- 5 Freedom from fear & distress

## Good Stockmanship

Good stockmanship is a key factor in animal welfare.  
A competent stockman should be able to:

- Recognise whether or not the animals are in good health (signs of ill health include: loss of appetite, listlessness, cessation of cuddling, discharge from eyes or nostrils, dribbling, persistent coughing, lameness, swollen joints, scouring, rapid loss of condition or emaciation, excessive scratching, abnormal skin conditions or other unusual conditions)
- Understand the significance of a change in the behaviour of the animals
- Know when veterinary treatment is required
- Implement a planned herd health programme (e.g. preventative treatments, vaccination programmes if necessary) and have a herd health plan in place on farm
- Implement appropriate animal feeding and grassland management programmes
- Recognise if the general environment (indoors or outdoors) is adequate for the promotion of good health and welfare
- Have management skills appropriate to the scale and technical requirements of the production system
- Handle animals with care, avoiding undue stress. All farms must have proper animal handling facilities, including pens and a crush where an animal can be restrained with minimum risk of injury and stress.
- Early and frequent contact with competent persons greatly reduces the stress to animals subsequently.

## Veterinary Procedures

Common veterinary type activities must always be carried out in a manner that minimises stress. These activities include: Disbudding, castration, dosing and injection.

- It is illegal to disbud or dehorn calves over 14 days old without using local anaesthetic.
- Recommended that a cauterisation method is used at 1-2 weeks to remove the horn buds.
- It is illegal to castrate calves over 6 months of age without using a local anaesthetic.
- It is recommended that male calves intended for castration should be castrated between 2-6 months of age.
- The operator should be trained in the burdizzo procedure
- De-horning must be undertaken by a veterinary surgeon and requires the use of local anaesthetic.
- Hormonal growth promoters or antimicrobial digestive enhancers must not be used.
- When dosing cattle it is recommended that:
  - Dosing equipment used is appropriate for the size of the animal
  - Dosing guns should be properly calibrated
  - Care is taken to avoid injuring the animals throat
  - Consider "pour on" treatments to minimise handling stress
- When injecting cattle it is recommended that producers:
  - Ensure that animals are handled and restrained in a manner that seeks to minimise stress
  - Adhere to manufacturer recommendations for dosage rates and injection procedures
  - Avoid injecting animals in the loin, hindquarter or other high value meat cut areas
  - Maintain strict hygiene standards during injection
  - Use single use (disposable) needles and syringes
  - In the rare event that a needle breaks, the broken needle should be removed in a safe manner under veterinary supervision if necessary.

# FACILITIES FOR CATTLE ON FARM

- **Cattle should have clean drinking water available at all times. It is recommended that:**
  - Cattle have unrestricted access to a clean fresh water supply
  - Water troughs or drinkers should be regularly cleaned and inspected daily to ensure that they are fully functional
  - Water troughs should be protected or raised high enough (e.g. 750mm high) to prevent fouling by badgers or other wild animals
  - Water supply is adequate to meet peak animal requirements i.e. will drinkers fill sufficiently quickly to avoid any animals in a group remaining thirsty
  - The water supply should be designed to minimise the risk of the water freezing in the supply line, and thereby cutting off the supply to the cattle.
- **Pastures on farm should be adequately fenced to ensure good biosecurity protocol and safety of animals.**
  - Fences should not contain any hazards which could cause injury to the cattle.
  - Electric fencing should always be operated as per manufacturer instructions.
- **Shelter should be provided for all cattle**
  - Protection from wind and rain should be provided where possible particularly for young stock outdoors for the first time.
  - Out wintered cattle should have access to a well-drained lying area.

# HOUSING & SPACE REQUIREMENTS

In Ireland, cattle are normally at pasture for over 200 days. Housing in Ireland is used to provide shelter for animals during the colder, wetter months when grass supply is lower. It also protects pastures from damage caused by cattle in wet weather (Poaching)

- All houses should be adequately ventilated allowing for a supply of fresh air. Thus, allowing heat dissipation and preventing the build up of gases such as carbon dioxide, ammonia or slurry gases.
- Surfaces on which cattle walk should be designed, constructed and maintained to avoid discomfort, stress or injury to the animals. Uneven surfaces cause bruising of the feet and smooth surfaces cause slipping.
- The accommodation should have sufficient natural light so as not to cause discomfort to the animals
- Artificial lights should be present so that animals can be inspected adequately during darker times
- All buildings should have smoke/fire alarms present
- Uneaten and spoilt feed should be removed to avoid sickness and also to avoid attracting rodents

# SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Housed stock should have freedom of movement and ample floor space for lying, grooming and normal animal to animal interactions.
- A well designed, properly constructed and fully maintained slatted floor unit for cattle provides the necessary comfort with minimum distress or injury to the cattle.
- Escapes/creeps should be provided, if young calves are housed with adults, i.e. sucklers.



# FEEDING SPACE

- There should be sufficient space for all animals to feed comfortably at the same time.
- The feed trough should be sufficiently large so that animals have adequate access to food at all times.
- Avoid any sharp edges or projections on the feed barrier or on the pen divisions which could cause injury to cattle.
- The feed should be kept within reach of the animal.

Feeding Regime	Suckler Cows	Finishing Cattle	Store Cattle	Weanlings
• Ad lib roughage	300-400	300-350	250-300	225-300
• Restricted roughage	600-700	600-650	250-300	225-300
Concentrates / roots	600-700	600-650	500-600	400-500



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Recommendations on Feed Space Allowances (m2 per head) for Growing / Adult Cattle  
(Source: Teagasc)

Housing System	Liveweight Range (kg) / Animal Type							
	200-300	301-400	401-500	501-600	601-700	700+	Dry Suckler Cow	Lactating Suckler Cow
Wholly bedded shed	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.4	3.5-3.9	4.0-4.4	4.5-4.9	5.0	4.0-5.0	5.0-6.0
Combination bedded and slatted floor	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.4	3.5-3.9	4.0-4.4	4.5-4.9	5.0	4.0-5.0	5.0-6.0
Part bedded / outdoor feeding								
Indoor lying area	2.0	2.0-2.3	2.4-2.7	2.8-3.2	3.3-3.6	3.7	2.8-3.6	3.8-4.6
Outdoor feeding / exercising area	1.0	1.0-1.1	1.1-1.2	1.2-1.2	1.3-1.3	1.4	1.3-1.4	1.3-1.4
Fully Slatted sheds	1.4-1.8	1.8-1.9	1.9-2.0	2.1-2.2	2.3-2.4	2.5+	2.6-3.0	3.0-3.2

# BEHAVIOUR OF CATTLE

- At housing, cattle of broadly similar age and size should be penned together where possible. This social group should be allowed to develop and reallocation of animals to other pens should be minimised. Sick animals should be segregated from other animals if the sick animal is being compromised by other animals.
- During the daily inspection(s) of animals, check for any abnormal behaviour. At meal feeding check that all animals have equal desire to feed. Failure by an animal to go to the feed trough may be an early indication of illness or timidity



# MANAGEMENT & FEEDING

The management and feeding of cattle is core to their animal welfare on farm.

## Movement of Cattle

- Animals should be treated and handled in a manner, which avoids injury and stress. The use of goads or electrical prodders is not allowed.
- The movement of animals from one paddock to another, or to penning facilities, should be done without recourse to excessive force. Beating the animals or having an untrained aggressive dog which causes the animals to panic should be avoided.
- At the time of movement, check for any abnormal behaviour, lameness, reluctance to move or isolation from the remainder of the herd.
- Have adequate help available to move the animals.
- Cattle need to see where they are expected to move to, i.e. if going indoors or into a truck make sure that lights are on and corridors are clear.
- Cattle are wary of new events and need to be gently handled to allow them adjust to a new situation.

## Pasture management

- A supply of clean fresh water should be available at all times.
- The pasture area should be free of hazards which may cause injury to the animal.
- Paddock grazing or the use of a buffer area allows better budgeting of the grass available, thereby matching the demand of the animals with grass supply.



# TRANSPORTING CATTLE

- Means of transport should be soundly constructed, easy to clean and disinfect and must not cause injury or distress to animals being transported.
- Floors of the vehicle must be sufficiently strong to hold the weight of animals being transported
- All structures must be free from sharp edges, gaps, holes and protrusions.
- Vehicle should have a strong, weatherproof roof which protects animals on board, while still meeting ventilation requirements.

Transport: Space Requirement for Bovines		
Small Calves	50 kg Average	0.3-0.4 m2/head
Medium Sized Calves	110 kg Average	0.4-0.7 m2/head
Heavy Calves	200 kg Average	0.7-0.9 m2/head
Medium Sized Cattle	325 kg Average	0.9-1.3 m2/head
Heavy Cattle	550 kg Average	1.3-1.6 m2/head
Very Heavy Cattle	>700 kg	> 1.6m2/head

# OUTCOME MEASURES

Tracking outcome measures enables Kepak Group to track performance. Outcome measures and metrics which are tracked by our technical team at each of our abattoirs. These outcome measures drive continuous improvement and ensure that we remain committed to improving the health and welfare of each animal in our supply chain.

# COMMUNICATION

We communicate our animal welfare policies and Code of Practice for our farmer suppliers through our procurement team, our farming newsletter and through knowledge transfer events.

At a corporate level, our policies and plans are communicated to the senior management team and will form part of Kepak Core, our blue print for achieving growth in sustainable way.

Through our Beef Health Check project in conjunction with Animal Health Ireland, we give feedback to farmers on Liver Fluke and Pneumonia with every batch of cattle killed at all sites.

In addition to our Beef Health Check report, Farmers may also request feedback on rumen damage from acidosis 2 day prior to slaughter. It is our policy to revert to farmers on results within 7 days of slaughter. Data is available for up to two years after slaughter.

We believe that initiatives as above are beneficial for our suppliers in decision making on farm regarding animal health and welfare.

