



## KEEPING YOUR CATTLE HEALTHY

### AIM: TO KEEP CATTLE HEALTHY CATTLE

- ❖ You can tell a lot about the health of a cow by its **behaviour**;
- ❖ Get to know your animals (what they like to eat, where they like to stand / rest; and what they do during the day);
- ❖ If an animal is **behaving differently from usual**, that may indicate it is not feeling well, e.g. stands by itself away from other animals; is not interested in food and / or water;

**REMEMBER:** Cows may behave differently during their production cycle, e.g. before calving, 'on heat'. **KEEP RECORDS** (e.g. dates of heat, service, etc) so you know how each cow should behave.

The **5 freedoms** can remind us how to keep an animal healthy:

### 1. Freedom from **hunger and thirst**

Always provide your cow with:

- ✓ fresh, clean **water**;
- ✓ **roughage** and **ensure its not wasted** by feeding in a hay rack / feed trough;
- ✓ the right type of food for production stage.



➤ *See fact sheets on feeding calves, heifers or adult animals*

- ✓ A cow's **body condition score (BCS)** can indicate if a cow is getting enough feed.;
- ✓ **BCS** should relate to the stage of production.

➤ *See fact sheet on body condition score for further information*

### 2. Freedom from **thermal and physical discomfort**



Always provide:

- ✓ Access to **shade**;
- ✓ A **clean** and **comfortable lying area**;
- ✓ A **dry place** to stand.



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### 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease

- ✓ **Vaccinate** cows against **Lumpy Skin Disease, Black leg, Haemorrhagic Septicaemia** and any other diseases present in your area (get advice from your local veterinary officer);
- ✓ **Test** animals annually for **TB** and **Brucellosis**;
- ✓ **Dip / Spray** regularly using a recommended product to keep animals free from **ticks**;
- ✓ **Deworm** as recommended by your local Veterinary Officer;
- ✓ Ensure your farm is free from **sharp objects / items of rubbish** (e.g. plastic bags, wire, string) which animals may eat, or injure themselves on;
- ✓ **Stop** animals injuring one another, e.g. separate horned and polled animals; separate different sizes and life stages, e.g. calves, heifers, bulls;
- ✓ Use **good milking hygiene**. *See separate fact sheet*;
- ✓ **Look** at your animals at least once per day, get to know what's normal and not normal;
- ✓ If you have concerns about your animal's health, contact your **local veterinary officer**.

### 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour

- ✓ Cows are **social animals**, so allow them to form social groups, e.g. groups of calves; groups of heifers;
- ✓ Provide posts for cows to **scratch** on;
- ✓ Give them time to **lie down** and **chew their cud**.



### 5. Freedom from fear and distress

- ✓ Be **quiet** and **calm** when approaching and handling animals;
- ✓ Make sure animals aren't **bullied** by other animals;
- ✓ If animals are **blind** in one eye, approach them from the side they can see from.

ZDTP is focused on supporting dairy farmers to improve their productivity, milk quality and linkages to urban markets. The views expressed in this publication are those of the implementers of the programme and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government. For further information, please contact ZDTP on [zdtpinfo@primeconsultants.net](mailto:zdtpinfo@primeconsultants.net). Follow us on [www.zambiadairy.com](http://www.zambiadairy.com), Facebook ([facebook.com/zambiadairy/](https://facebook.com/zambiadairy/)) and Twitter (@DairyZambia).