

Animal and Range Sciences Department

General Livestock Husbandry Policies and Procedures

October 2015 [DRAFT]

Purpose

As a public institution, Montana State University is committed to guaranteeing the welfare and well-being of all animals in its care. The Department of Animal and Range Sciences seeks to be an example of professional and compassionate management for all current and potential livestock owners and managers.

Proper management is essential for the well-being of the animals (FASS, 1999). The purpose of this document is to outline and define minimum husbandry procedures and policies for livestock managed by the Department of Animal and Range Sciences at farm and ranch units owned by the Montana Agricultural Experiment Station.

This document attempts to codify general policies and procedures. However, the Department recognizes the importance of human judgment in managing livestock. As such, the levels of care outlined below may need to be exceeded under specific circumstances. Additional protocols and procedures applying to animals used in research projects or teaching exercises are contained in separate documents submitted to the Montana State University Institutional Care and Use Committee.

Responsibility

- As the Administrator of the unit, the Head of the Department of Animal and Range Sciences is ultimately responsible for the care and welfare of the animals managed by the Department.
- The Farm Manager is directly responsible for the care of livestock managed at the Department of Animal and Range Sciences three farm units: MSU Livestock Center (Towne Farm), Fort Ellis Research Ranch, and Red Bluff Research Ranch.
 - The Farm Manager is expected to ensure that all General Livestock Husbandry Policies and Procedures are followed.
 - The Farm Manager may delegate responsibilities to employees.
 - The Farm Manager reports directly to the Department Head.
- Due to the distance between the Towne Farm and the Red Bluff Research Ranch, the Red Bluff Ranch Foreman is immediately responsible for the care and welfare of animals located at this unit.
- For animals used in certain research or teaching projects, responsibility for care may be transferred to the Principal Investigator or Instructor. In such cases, dates, times, and circumstances should be clearly stated in written protocols for the project or class.

Indicators and Control Points

Animal well-being has both physical and psychological components. No single objective measurement exists that can be used to evaluate the health and well-being of animals. Monitoring multiple integrated indicators provides the best means of assessing animal well-being (FASS, 1999). Providing for the general care and well-being of agricultural livestock includes monitoring critical control points and responding to changes in these indicators. A high level of stockmanship is required to adequately detect and assess indicators of health and well-being (FASS, 1999). Control points fall into four broad categories: animals, feed, water, and facilities.

- Animals will be monitored for general signs of health and well-being as indicated by:
 - Body condition
 - Hair coat
 - Posture
 - Appetite
 - Behavior
 - Physical signs of injury, illness or disease

- Feed and water sources will be monitored for:
 - Availability
 - Amount
 - Quality

- Facilities will be monitored for:
 - Fences
 - Appropriate for species and degree of confinement
 - Function
 - Safety
 - Shelter (natural and artificial)
 - Appropriate for species and season
 - Surfaces (i.e., footing) appropriate for degree of confinement
 - Ventilation

Monitoring Frequency

- For animals housed in stalls, all control points will be monitored twice daily.
- For animals housed in corrals, paddocks and pens, all control points will be monitored daily.
- For animals being hand-fed in pastures, all control points will be monitored daily.
- For animals grazing in pastures, all control points will be monitored at least three times a week. No more than two days shall separate monitoring events.
 - E.g., monitoring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays would be acceptable. Monitoring only on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays would not be acceptable.
 - In large pastures containing broken terrain and (or) timber it is not practical or possible to locate all animals individually. In such cases, livestock personnel shall make a reasonable attempt to monitor a representative sample of the animals.
- Due to increased risk to animal health and well-being, certain circumstances warrant monitoring control points more frequently. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Parturition
 - Weaning
 - Climatic extremes (e.g., storms, risk of freezing water, drought, etc.)
 - Use of mechanical devices to provide water

Emergencies

The Farm Manager will determine and communicate responsibilities and procedures for managing specific events. When monitoring reveals evidence or risk or emergency, the Farm Manager (or Ranch Foreman at Red Bluff) shall be notified as soon as possible. Livestock personnel shall call a veterinarian directly if necessary.

Records and Accountability

At each farm unit, a log shall be maintained that allows animal management personnel to certify that monitoring was completed. The Farm Manager and Department Head shall determine the specific format of the log. The log shall:

- Clearly define management groups.
 - A management group is a group of animals that are housed and fed and managed together.
- Track management groups separately
- Record:
 - Date.
 - The nature of any problems or deficiencies detected.
 - Action(s) taken.
 - Initials of personnel responsible.

In addition, at each farm unit records of the following shall be maintained:

- Identification of animals treated for sickness or injury
- Dates when observed and treated
- Treatments and pharmaceuticals administered
- Personnel involved

Failure to Monitor

It is the responsibility of the Farm Manager to assure that monitoring of all livestock is completed according to the procedures outlined above. Responsibilities delegated to other employees must be clearly communicated. Monitoring failures shall be addressed as outlined below.

- First failure to monitor as assigned:
 - The supervisor shall meet with the negligent employee and discuss the situation.
 - A letter of reprimand will be placed in the employee's file.
- Second failure:
 - The employee shall be suspended.
 - "Termination for Cause" proceedings shall be initiated according to the MSU Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual.

Prevention of Disease

For each livestock species, in consultation with a veterinarian and the Department Head, the farm manager shall establish and implement sanitation measures and vaccination programs to reduce risks associated with disease.

- Specific written protocols will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
- Dates of administration and products used will be recorded.

Reference:

FASS. 1999. Guide For the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching. Federation of Animal Science Societies, Savoy, IL.