

Down and out with how to manage down cows? Here's what you need to know.

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Even though the dairy cow has evolved with a lot of help from us she is still hard wired as a prey species meaning that when a cow is down and not getting up something is NOT RIGHT!

What are common reasons and things you should be asking yourself when a cow is down?

- Is she about to calve? Is she experiencing a difficult calving?
- Is she fresh? Does she have milk fever?
- Has she been battling an infection (eg. metritis or mastitis)? Has she become toxic?
- Has she suffered an injury or trauma?

From the scenarios above it is your job as a farmer to decide if it is within your skill set to treat a down cow according to which clinical disease she is presenting with. Please follow your on-farm SOPS or prescriptions provided by your veterinarian. If you are unsure of how to treat or what the disease process is, a down cow is always worth a call or visit from the vet. It's also very important to remember that regardless of treatment it is essential to maintain supportive care, such as deep soft bedding and easy access to feed and water. Now, let's say you have decided why your cow is down and have treated her appropriately, ensured that she has good supportive care, and she is not up within 24 hours, you may be thinking did I treat for the right disease or does she just need more time? It is in your best interest to contact your veterinarian as a down cow's success to standing is improved by how quickly she is appropriately diagnosed and then managed for any secondary damage.

Down Cow Conditions that are curable*	Down Cow Conditions that are incurable and euthanasia required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-most metabolic conditions-nerve damage-minor muscle loss/tears-minor nerve damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-coxofemoral joint luxation (hip dislocation)-gastrocnemius rupture (hock touches the ground)-broken or open fractured limbs

Down cows are curable when they are caught early, treated appropriately, and receive supportive care

Lastly, the importance of lifting and moving a down cow safely. As an industry we need to get away from using hip lifters as they do far more damage than good. We know that using hip lifters can have a negative effect on the gluteal muscles that insert from the hip to the femur. But how does one move a +1000lb beast? Unfortunately, there is no simple or perfect way. It is essential to try to handle with care by using large slings or belly band apparatus', gently rolling into a loader bucket, shifting onto a stone boat or plywood, and pulling to a soft bedded location. Do not aggressively pull on the head/neck or tail. Secondary trauma from hip lifters or trying to move the cow inappropriately can be the reason why she will not get up such as broken ribs or vertebrae or severe internal bruising that is not identifiable on physical exam.

Please talk to your vet today if you have any questions regarding the management of down cows!