

- **Manage to Reduce Calving Problems or Difficult Births.** Producers should carry out practices that reduce calving problems. Forty-six percent of downer cows were reported to be the result of difficult births. Frequently observe cows during the calving season. Do not permit the calving process to go on for an extended period. Consider providing assistance earlier than under normal conditions. Use “common sense” using calf pullers. Nerve damage during the calving process increases the probability that the cow will be a “downer.” In the long-run, selecting and using herd sires with appropriate birth weight EPDs as well as properly selecting, growing and managing replacement heifers will contribute to reducing the “risk” of downer cows.

Some other management suggestions that would aid in preventing “downer cows” during both the “short” and “long run” would include:

- **Plan Safe Transporting of Animals** When transporting animals, neither overload nor underload the truck or trailer. The loading facilities, the truck or trailer should have “good footing.” Drive carefully and avoid sudden stops and starts. A cow that gets down and is injured on the way to the market has the potential to be considered a “downer,” at the market. Market operators will probably not accept cows that they conclude will not withstand the stress of transporting and marketing and being mobile when reaching the slaughterhouse.
- **Cull Aggressive Animals.** Animals that are aggressive toward others in the herd , especially toward older or weaker animals , should be culled. These animals will especially created problems for weak animals.
- **Provide “Roughed” Surfaces Where Cattle are Moved.** Slick surfaces have the potential to cause the animal to slip, fall, “spraddle,” and become “downers.”
- **Provide Adequate Nutrition to Cattle.** This includes energy, protein and minerals. Inadequate nutrition results in “thin” and weak cows that have reduced immunity and more susceptible to diseases and would have potential to be downers.

Summary

The above suggestions should be of value to cow-calf producers in evaluating the risk of “downer cows” in their herds. Market “at risk” cows before further deterioration occurs and they still have value. At risk cows that cannot be immediately marketed should be separated from the herd and provide management, health and nutrition programs to reduce the risk. Managing to prevent injuries and calving problems will also reduce risk. Without proper care and management, several beef cows may become “downer cows” before spring.

Either manage to keep them up and walking or market them. Proper culling and marketing of cull breeding stock can contribute up to 20 percent of the returns to cow-calf operations. Work to keep that percentage up.