

# Care and Management of Bobby Calves

## Position Statement

The NZVA believes that bobby calf welfare must meet the relevant legislation.

NZVA members will continue to play an essential role in educating and supporting farmers, processors, industry bodies and legislators.

## Background

For the purposes of this position statement, a "bobby calf" is defined as a calf less than fourteen days of age and is intended for early slaughter. The term "humane treatment" refers to the use of practices that recognise the bobby calf's sentience and which minimise the physical and emotional distress experienced by bobby calves during handling, transport, and slaughter.

The Dairy Cattle Code of Welfare, Transport within New Zealand Code of Welfare and Commercial Slaughter Code of Welfare as well as the Care and Procedures Regulations that relate to young calves define the standards that relate to ensuring the welfare of bobby calves on farm, during transport and at slaughter premises. All persons in charge of bobby calves along the supply chain from farm to slaughter have a responsibility to ensure their welfare is protected

NZVA acknowledges the significant improvement in bobby calf welfare and monitoring that has occurred over the last 15 years involving all stakeholders including NZVA members.

The transport and handling of bobby calves can have negative impacts on their welfare, including increased stress levels, dehydration, and injury. Furthermore, poor handling and transport practices can lead to the spread of diseases, which can have implications for both animal and human health.

This position statement aims to ensure that bobby calves are treated with respect and compassion and that their welfare is protected throughout their lives. It will serve to support the dairy industry and all stakeholders along the bobby calf supply chain to meet their obligations under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and other relevant legislation and codes of practice.

## Recommendations

1. NZVA encourages the dairy industry to continue to reduce the numbers of bobby calves and find strategies to provide these animals with a life worth living.
2. The minimum age of bobby calves for transport should be considered in future legislation. A balance between high animal welfare outcomes and, transport and processor constraints should continue to be explored.
3. Collaborative strategies to enhance bobby calf welfare should be encouraged and supported between farmers, processors, industry bodies, legislators and veterinarians whenever possible.