



Cattle Health Alert: The Downer Cow (Recumbency)

A cow that cannot rise is a **medical emergency**. Prompt investigation and intervention are crucial for a successful recovery. The longer a cow remains down, the higher the risk of irreversible muscle and nerve damage.



Why It's Urgent

When a cow is down, her own body weight causes severe pressure on her muscles and nerves, particularly in the rear legs. This leads to:

- **Rapid Muscle Damage:** Blood flow is restricted, causing tissue death.
- **Nerve Damage:** Permanent paralysis can occur if pressure is not relieved quickly.

Goal: Get the cow standing within **12–24 hours**.



Immediate Action Plan

If you find a cow down, follow these steps immediately:

1. **Call the Veterinarian:** Accurate diagnosis is essential for treatment.
2. **Provide Safety and Comfort:**
 - Move her to a dry, heavily bedded area (sand, straw) to prevent further injury.
 - Protect her from extreme weather (shade in summer, shelter in winter).
3. **Ensure Proper Positioning:**
 - Try to keep her sternal (sitting on her chest), not flat on her side. Use bales of straw to support her.
 - **Roll her from side to side every 3–4 hours** to prevent pressure necrosis.
4. **Feed and Water:** Place fresh water and high-quality feed within easy reach.
5. **Attempt Lifting (With Care):** Only use professional lifting equipment (e.g., hip lifters, sling) under veterinary guidance, as improper use can cause more injury.

Potential Causes

Investigating the cause determines the treatment plan.

Cause	Description
Metabolic	Milk Fever (Hypocalcemia): Low blood calcium, common immediately before or after calving.
Calving Trauma	Nerve damage (obturator or sciatic nerve) or severe bruising during a difficult birth.
Injuries	Fractures, dislocations, or major muscular tears from slipping or falling.
Infection	Severe bacterial infections (e.g., Acute Mastitis, Metritis) causing shock and weakness.

Note: A downer cow requires frequent monitoring and dedicated nursing care to survive.