



Best Practice to Produce Clean Cattle

The main factors that affect hide cleanliness are Diet, Housing, Husbandry Practices, Transport

Diet

- Feed the driest, best quality silage to finishing cattle.
- If feeding roots, molasses, etc., include up to 1.0kg straw per head in the daily diet.
- If dung is very loose, withdraw roots & molasses in the final weeks before sale.
- Do not make sudden changes to the diet.
- All-concentrate finishing with straw gives cleaner cattle because of the drier diet.

Housing

- Overstocking in pens can lead to dirty cattle.
- Clean any accumulated dung on solid concrete areas of slatted pens and on slats if dung is not moving freely through the gaps
- Detailed guidelines on lying & feeding space can be got from Teagasc.
- In straw bedded houses, provide enough straw & bed regularly.
- Empty tanks before slurry rises to slat level.
- Maintain good ventilation in houses which will help keep cattle dry & clean.

Husbandry Practices

- Dose cattle at risk of fluke & stomach worms.
- Treat for deficiencies, (e.g., copper) or diseases (e.g., coccidiosis) that causes scouring.
- Trim tails at housing.
- Shave a 50mm strip along the spine to reduce sweating & keep cattle drier.

Pre-Sale Management

- Avoid unnecessary mixing of cattle groups.
- If straw is available, move very dirty cattle to straw bedding for the final 2-3 weeks.
- Remove low dry matter feeds & give ad lib hay, straw or high dry matter silage for the final 48 hours
- Do not restrict water or starve cattle in the final 24 hours.

Transport

- Use partitions / dividers to confine cattle if trailers are not full.
- Do not use sawdust to bed floors.
- Avoid loading cattle if they are very wet or in wet weather conditions.
- Hauliers must implement best practice to ensure cattle do not get excessively dirty or wet during transport.
- Covered trailers prevent animals getting wet during transport. It is essential that covered trailers are well ventilated to avoid sweating.



Existing 5 categories of hide cleanliness has been simplified into 3 categories

Satisfactory:

Cattle appear "clean" with little or no dung adhering to the hide. This category can go for pre-slaughter inspection and normal carcase dressing applies.

Acceptable:

Cattle are dry, or slightly damp and dirty. This category can go to pre-slaughter inspection but hides will require some post-slaughter remedial measures which may include on-line clipping.

Unacceptable:

Cattle are wet and/or contaminated with amounts of dirt, dung and/or bedding material adhering, which presents an unacceptable risk of unhygienic dressing. Cattle may be retained in the lairage or other suitable accommodation until they have dried sufficiently. When cattle become drier they can proceed to slaughter and post slaughter remedial measures.



CLEAN CATTLE POLICY

A Guide for Beef Producers