



Dean Foods Commitment to Animal Welfare

Tail docking

Although some dairy farmers feel that tail docking is necessary to promote milk quality or worker comfort, there is no scientific evidence demonstrating that tail docking improves udder health, cleanliness or employee safety. There is, however, evidence that tail docking is a painful procedure that may negatively affect the welfare of the cow due to chronic pain and fly irritation. For this reason, Dean Foods and its Animal Welfare Advisory Council support the positions taken by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Association of Bovine Practitioners and the National Mastitis Council and encourage farmers to promptly discontinue the routine tail docking of cows.

Dehorning

Dean Foods recognizes that the practice of disrupting the growth of horns is necessary to protect both cows and the people that work with them. We also recognize that the pain associated with this procedure can be minimized when done at an early age, with anesthetics and long lasting pain relief medicine. For that reason, Dean Foods and its Animal Welfare Advisory Council support animal welfare programs that promote the adoption of best management practices for “disbudding,” (stopping the growth of horn tissue before the horn bud has attached to the calf’s skull) in both the timeliness of the procedure and in providing appropriate use of analgesics and anesthetics. We also support a program that encourages the use of polled genetics into breeding programs to promote polled (naturally hornless) cattle, which may eventually eliminate or minimize the need for dehorning and disbudding. However, sound science and responsible herd management practices would encourage that any significant change in herd genetics be pursued deliberately and slowly to avoid unintended negative consequences of genetic selection focused on a single trait. Given that such progress will require a long-term outlook, we believe the responsible approach to address the issue today is to promote programs that ensure that farmers adopt best practices, minimizing the pain associated with the necessary procedure today while they work with their advisors to introduce polled genetics into their herds.