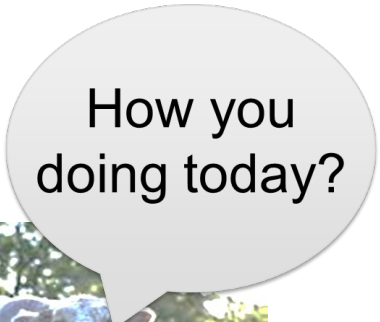


# Cows Talk to Me

## The Basics of Checking Cattle

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Cattle don't use words, but they still communicate with us. The question is do we understand them? This publication is devoted to help everyone check their cattle for any signs of trouble.

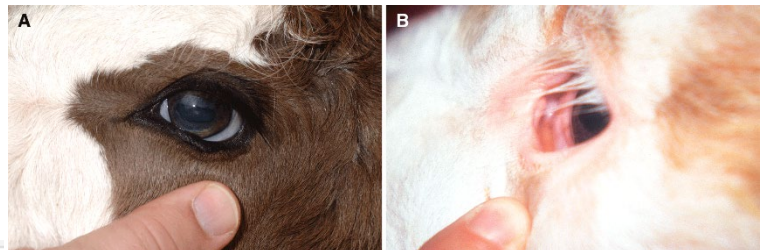


Since cattle don't use words, how do they speak with us? Start with looking at these areas first:

- How they walk
- How they stand
- Where they stand
- How they react to things
- How they eat
- Differences in appearance
- Head, Ears and Eyes
- Vocalization (lost calf, distress)

Things to look at:			
-Eyes bright?	-Ears droopy?	-Skin coat soft and shiny?	-Breathing normal?
-Swollen Joints?	-Nose runny?	-Tail, Back and Hooves	-Body Condition Score
-Chewing cud?	-Manure consistency	-Pest present (flies, lice)	-Routine (creatures of habit)

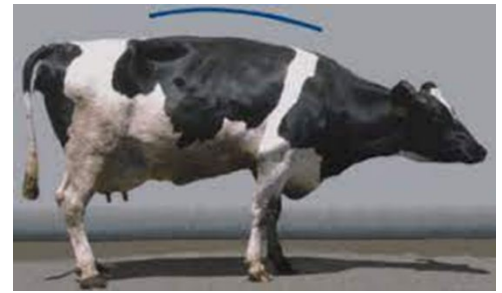
Sick animals:			
-Are sometimes by themselves	-Have a droopy head	-Stop chewing cud	-Cough
-Ears are droopy	-Slow to move	-Scours (calves, dehydration)	



**Sunken eyes = Dehydration.**  
The picture on left is normal eyes.  
The picture on the right is sunken eyes.

**Body Condition Score** – tells if the cattle are getting enough protein and energy in their diet.  
1-4 is too skinny and may not breed.  
5-7 is just right, happy cattle!  
8-9 are too fat. Could cause breeding and calving issues.

The **arch in the back** indicates pain or lameness. In this case the cow was found to have Hardware Disease. Hardware Disease is not a disease at all. It is when an animal has ingested (swallowed) a piece of metal. 65% of cattle slaughtered in the eastern US have Hardware Disease. Rumen magnets are used to treat Hardware Disease.



**A high tail** is a sign of pelvic area irritation. This is seen in cattle when calving, hard stools, lack of water in diet, infection, and pain.

Sometimes animals need to be pinned up to help with health issues. Take a look at your **stalls** where the animal will be. If you notice cobwebs or feel dampness, then that is a sign of low ventilation. Animals need good air flow. Also, extreme dusty areas lead to poor breathing. This could cause pneumonia



**The 20 Minute Rule** – is the time that the cattle need to settle back down and return to normal activities after the producer has come into the field. Producers need to see how the animals behave in a non-stimulus situation. We are so rushed to get home to eat dinner or the kids have a ballgame, etc., that we could miss many signs of cattle trying to tell us something important. Use these 20 minutes to look at each animal individually, check to see if they are all there, are any of them apart from the herd (and why), check the surroundings, look at the manure, look for predators, check the amount of minerals, and anything else for your individual farm.



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