



## Caring for livestock carries with it tough responsibilities.

Story & photo by Troy Smith, field editor

**W**hen you haul livestock, you need to ask yourself if you would be comfortable with anyone seeing the condition of the animals on your trailer, knowing they are your animals and that you are responsible for them.”

That was the question and call to accountability that animal scientist Heidi Carroll presented to producers attending a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) session she conducted during the 26th Range Beef Cow Symposium (RBCS) hosted Nov. 18-20 in Mitchell, Neb. Carroll, a South Dakota State University Extension livestock stewardship specialist and South Dakota's BQA coordinator, told attendees that livestock haulers are coming under increased scrutiny.

According to Carroll, most major packing plants have set Jan. 1, 2020, as the date after which they will only accept cattle from transporters that are BQA Transportation (BQAT)-certified.

The requirement applies to commercial truckers, farmer-feeders, ranchers and anyone delivering animals directly to a harvest facility. All must have participated in the BQAT program, which focuses on transporter safety, timely delivery, fitness for transport, cattle handling and emergency preparedness.

Most of Carroll's symposium session was devoted to a discussion of fitness for transport. Its determination typically starts, she said, with evaluation of mobility. Carroll

explained the North American Meat Institute (NAMI) scoring system, which has become an industry-wide tool for monitoring beef cattle mobility. She described the four-point scoring system as follows:

- 1 → Normal. Walks easily with no apparent lameness.
- 2 → Exhibits minor stiffness, shortness of stride or slight limp,



Deciding whether an animal is fit for transport typically starts with evaluation of mobility, said Heidi Carroll, SDSU Extension livestock stewardship specialist and South Dakota BQA coordinator.

but does not lag behind normal cattle moving as a group.

3 → Exhibits obvious stiffness, difficulty taking steps, an obvious limp or obvious discomfort, and lags behind normal cattle walking as a group.

4 → Extremely reluctant or refuses to move even when encouraged by a handler.

Carroll said that animals whose mobility status is beyond the four-point scoring system would be considered nonambulatory or “downer” animals that typically cannot stand and definitely cannot move under their own power.

Following evaluation of mobility, cattle haulers must determine

if an animal may be safely transported as is, transported with special provisions, held and re-evaluated at a later time, or considered permanently unfit for transport. Animals falling into the latter category may then be candidates for humane euthanasia.

Carroll discussed recommended methods of euthanasia, including use of a captive bolt device or firearm (.38 caliber or larger was recommended) and proper placement of bolt or bullet to achieve an effective and humane result.

The certification event was hosted prior to the 2019 RBCS, coverage for which may be found at [www.rangebeefcow.com](http://www.rangebeefcow.com) courtesy sponsorship by Leachman Cattle of Colorado. Visit the site Newsroom for summaries of the sessions, proceedings and PowerPoint presentations provided by the speakers. Audio is provided if available. ■

Editor's note: Troy Smith is a cattleman and freelancer from Sargent, Neb.