

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION OF CATTLE

DISTANCE EXAM

1. Environment – faeces, urine, discharges on floor, cleanliness, infrastructure
2. Demeanour – is the animal bright, alert and responsive (BAR) or dull and depressed (DD); anxious; restless; interacting with herd mates
3. Posture; stance; gait
4. Conformation – symmetry and shape of abdomen, thorax, limbs, head
5. Lumps, bumps, lacerations, lesions
6. Ectoparasites
7. Hair coat and skin – shiny or dull, dry, alopecia, colour change
8. Discharges – eyes, nostrils, vulva, rectum...
9. Respiration – rate and character (15 – 30 breaths per minute)
10. Initial Body Condition (Provel), Body Condition Score (Elanco)
11. Breed

HANDS-ON EXAM: FIVE STATIONS

- Examination of all lymph nodes includes inspection and palpation. The size, consistency and pain on palpation should be noted and it should be compared to the corresponding lymph node on the opposite side.
- Examination of all limbs includes inspection and palpation along the entire limb. Any heat, pain, swelling, redness of the leg or joints must be noted. The limb may be lifted and the hoof cleaned and inspected also.

STATION 1 – TAIL END

1. Pulse (must be done first) – coccygeal artery (60 - 80 beats/minute)
2. Attempt to collect a urine sample. Note posture.
3. Tail tone and anal tone
4. Vulval mucous membranes – colour, lesions, discharges, CRT
5. Skin and hair condition at escutcheon
6. Final Body Condition Score (Provel)
7. Rectal temperature (38 - 39°C)
8. Evidence of diarrhoea around anus and/or on tail

STATION 2 - LEFT SIDE

1. Left prefemoral lymph node
2. Left hind leg
3. Palpate and auscultate rumen at left paralumbar fossa - consistency normally doughy, rate of contractions usually 2 - 3/2 minutes or 7/5 minutes.
4. Percuss and auscultate left paralumbar fossa. Simultaneously auscultate and ballot rumen (succussion).
5. Percuss and auscultate left flank caudal to 9th rib
6. Ballot left flank
7. Palpate ribs for any fractures or lesions
8. Auscultate and percuss lung field at several levels. Note rate (15 - 30 breaths/minute) and character of lung sounds.
9. Auscultate the heart. Note the rate (60 - 80 beats/minute), character and rhythm.
10. Left prescapular lymph node
11. Left forelimb
12. Withers pinch test

STATION 3 - HEAD AND NECK

1. Shape and symmetry of head
2. Note if animal is naturally polled, horned, or was dehorned.
3. Percuss paranasal and frontal sinuses
4. Ears - ectoparasites, wax build-up, temperature, discharges
5. Eyes - discharges, degree of sunkeness, eyelid skin tent, mucous membrane colour, menace response, nictitans, corneal integrity
6. Muzzle and nostrils - crusting, erosions, moist or dry, discharges (character, unilateral or bilateral)
7. Mouth - viscosity of saliva, ulcers, vesicles, colour of oral mucosa, hard palate
8. Palpate tongue - 'wooden tongue', papillae
9. Age animal by dentition
10. Submandibular and retropharyngeal lymph nodes
11. Neck muscle and brisket - swellings, oedema
12. Jugular veins, and jugular pulse on both left and right
13. Palpate trachea. Try to elicit a cough.

STATION 4 - RIGHT SIDE

1. Right prescapular lymph node
2. Right forelimb
3. Palpate ribs for any fractures or lesions
4. Auscultate heart
5. Auscultate and percuss right lung field
6. Palpate liver behind right costal arch
7. Palpate and auscultate right paralumbar fossa for intestinal sounds (1/4-5 seconds)
8. Ballot right flank
9. Percuss and auscultate right flank caudal to 9th rib
10. Right prefemoral lymph node
11. Right hind limb

STATION 5

1. Size, conformation and symmetry of udder
2. Examine skin of udder and teats, and also between udder and medial thigh
3. Inspect teat orifices, palpate teat canals and teat sphincters
4. Palpate each quarter
5. Supramammary lymph nodes
6. Palpate mammary vein (subcutaneous abdominal)
7. Palpate umbilical area (swelling, heat, oedema, hernia)
8. Strip cup test
9. California Mastitis Test