

# What has changed?

2014 Review and Update of the Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy



**CHAWG**  
Cattle Health and Welfare Group

**AHDB**  
DAIRY



**holstein UK**  
holstein & british friesland



**Dairy UK**



**NMR**  
Information Partnerships

# What has changed?

The first Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy was launched in 2010, in recognition that as a sector, though we had progressed substantially, there was still much to do to improve the welfare of dairy cows in GB.

Since publication, annual progress reports have been produced, clearly communicating how the industry continues to progress in the agreed priority areas, some areas faster than others, though importantly as a sector we are committed to monitoring progress.

Recognising that the adoption of new scientifically robust knowledge is important and that new areas of priority may need to be included, the Cattle Health and Welfare Group (CHAWG), as representatives of the GB dairy sector, has undertaken an in depth review and revised the Strategy to deal with current issues.

The CHAWG has now developed two editions of the Cattle Health and Welfare Report (see [www.CHAWG.org.uk](http://www.CHAWG.org.uk)) which analysed cattle health and welfare data from a range of sources to enable a 'State of the Nation' report to be published. This resource is utilised by industry, policy makers and non-governmental organisations (NGO's). These documents have been used as a key reference point to influence the sectors focus in the Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy.

## What has changed?

### Aspirations

We have replaced the 'target' based approach to one that encourages the sector to work towards 'aspirations'. The recognition that we as a sector, want 'continuous improvement', as opposed to reaching a target point and thinking we are now done, is extremely important. Due to the diverse nature of the sector, target setting, and importantly quantifying progress, is extremely challenging and sometimes meaningless to the sector as a whole. By taking an aspirational approach, it allows the dairy sector to work towards a common agreed goal. Capturing progress in a range of formats/mechanisms will provide a rich review of our continuous improvement as a sector. Each priority has new aspiration/s.

Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy Year 3 revision and update inside

## NEW PRIORITIES



### Calf and Heifer Rearing

Youngstock are the future dairy producers and, as such, we need to ensure they get a great start to life in terms of health and welfare. The second edition of the Cattle Health and Welfare report lists calf pneumonia and scours as a major concern costing the industry up to £80 million annually. British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) data indicates a mortality rate for dairy calves (not including stillborn) is in the region of 3% (page 39 of the Cattle Health and Welfare Report – July 2014). In addition, the Kingshay 2013 report indicates that approximately 45% of animals leave the dairy herd within their first three lactations. Some of these departures will be linked to the growth and development of the animal from birth to first calving. The inclusion of this priority is seen by the sector as necessary based on the evidence available.



### Cow Comfort

Farmers are aware that allowing cows to behave naturally potentially increases the efficiency of the farm. It also underpins many of the production related priorities from the Strategy. The sector believes we need to increase our efforts in this priority area by taking a more proactive approach to ensuring cows have the most suitable environment to satisfy these behavioural needs, for example, maximising their lying times by ensuring their bedded areas do not compromise their welfare through discomfort and injury.

## CHANGES TO EXISTING PRIORITIES



### On Farm Recording

Emphasis has been placed on the use of the data on farm in supporting welfare related management decisions.



### Mastitis

The focus has changed to a greater focus on 'improving prevention' as opposed to 'treating' and 'control'.



### Farm Assurance

Has been removed as a priority. With 90% of GB milk production already operating within the Red Tractor Dairy Assurance Scheme (RTA Dairy), it was felt that farm assurance as a priority was not a key issue. Instead, emphasis will be placed on RTA Dairy requirements where appropriate in the delivery of actions under each of the priority areas in the strategy.



### Informing & Educating the Consumer

CHAWG felt this is not the role of the Strategy itself, which is to provide focus on the welfare needs of the dairy cow, promote improvements and monitor progress. The monitoring process will provide the necessary evidence, for interested stakeholders, on the continuous development of the sector in improving the welfare of the dairy cow.

## Actions related to the priority work areas

As each of the priorities, new or existing have had refined and focused 'aspirations' developed, this necessitated a review of all 'actions'. As a result, all actions have been reviewed and improved to ensure the aspiration is maximised.

### Evidence sources

All evidence sources have been reviewed in relation to the new aspirations and associated actions. Importantly they have been updated to include new data sources that have been identified during the process of developing the two editions of the Health and Welfare Reports.

## Who?

This is a fundamental change to the strategy that makes respective members of the sector more accountable by encouraging 'ownership' of individual organisations that are members of the CHAWG. The individual organisations are not responsible for delivering the priority, but provide a coordinating role as a 'champion' for that priority. This requires the responsible organisations to engage, and monitor, with sector organisations working in the specific priority areas and act as a conduit back to the CHAWG for progress updating and importantly the necessary reporting.

## When?

Different priorities require different timescales against which we can effectively report progress. As farming is a biological system, it is not possible to just flick a switch for change. Many of the priorities take time to implement, mitigating actions for and even longer to be able to quantify the impact of the actions. The CHAWG has divided priorities into a short (1-2 years), medium (2-4 years) and longer (3-5 years) term delivery timetable in order to manage stakeholders expectations on our continuous improvement efforts.

If information becomes available before the anticipated time, CHAWG will ensure this is captured in the reporting process.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact a representative at:

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For more detailed information about the further work and progress of this group, visit our website at

[www.chawg.org.uk](http://www.chawg.org.uk)

# Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy

## Year 3 Revision and Update - June 2015

- Short-term deliverable (1-2 years)
- Medium-term deliverable (2-4 years)
- Longer-term deliverable (3-5 years)

Priority	Aspiration	Action	Evidence source	Coordinated by	By when
Better on-farm recording for review and use of data in health planning	Dairy farmers recording the health and welfare events on the farm to enable more effective forward-planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop case studies that demonstrate the benefit of these records</li> <li>Industry-wide promotion and implementation of the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) guidelines for responsible antibiotic use as part of the herd health plan</li> <li>BCVA and RTA Dairy to explore how, through better alignment, health planning and records can be more effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RTA Dairy records</li> <li>AHDB Dairy (formerly DairyCo) research and communication activities</li> <li>Milk recording organisation (MRO) data</li> <li>Defra Farm Practices Survey and equivalents in Scotland and Wales</li> </ul>	RTA Dairy	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
	The establishment and coordination of a health platform that enables tracking and monitoring of cattle health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the sector in establishing an appropriate system for the collection and aggregation of relevant data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHDB</li> <li>Other industry data sources</li> </ul>	LAA	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Mastitis: Improvement in prevention, recognition, treatment and control	Improvement in udder health leading to improved welfare and a reduction in mastitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and communicate to the dairy community a list of available programmes</li> <li>Support the implementation of appropriate welfare outcome measures</li> <li>All farmers recording mastitis cases on farm</li> <li>Encourage active prevention and control of mastitis</li> <li>Work with dedicated supply chains to access data that can be aggregated and utilised by the sector</li> <li>RTA Dairy – Herd Health Plans must incorporate mastitis control</li> <li>Access to aggregated on-farm records for inclusion in the industry platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MRO's</li> <li>AHDB Dairy Mastitis Control Plan uptake and relevant resources supporting this aspiration</li> <li>Other data sources such as consultants / dedicated supply chain records</li> </ul>	AHDB Dairy	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Lameness: Improvement in prevention, recognition, treatment and control	Reduce the incidence of lameness leading to improved welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and implement through a range of mechanisms consistent key lameness indicators</li> <li>All farms to record cases of lameness</li> <li>Identify and communicate to the industry the availability of relevant support 'programmes' and encourage uptake</li> <li>Support the CPD activities of the National Association of Cattle Foot Trimmers (NACFT)</li> <li>Address industry confusion between Locomotion and Mobility Scoring to ensure cows are not in pain/discomfort when walking</li> <li>Access to aggregated on-farm records for inclusion in the industry platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHDB Dairy Healthy Feet programme</li> <li>National Association of Cattle Foot Trimmers (NACFT)</li> <li>Breed societies</li> <li>Other data sources such as consultant records</li> <li>RTA Dairy/Assurwel data on mobility</li> </ul>	BCVA	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Fertility management	The industry moving positively towards a calving index of 400 days. Good fertility is an indicator of the welfare of the cow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement in the number of cows holding to first service</li> <li>Include this benchmark and measure into industry programmes to first establish a benchmark then to monitor progress</li> <li>Promotion of industry programmes such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PD+, that help farmers make informed decisions regarding effective fertility management</li> </ul> </li> <li>Industry promotion of genetic indices and tools that support informed breeding decisions</li> <li>Development of fertility-related webinars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MRO data and other industry data (calving index)</li> <li>Consultant, breed society and veterinary data</li> <li>Industry database once established</li> </ul>	AHDB Dairy	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>
Cow nutrition	More cows at an appropriate condition score for stage of production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater access to nutritional education for both farmers and advisors</li> <li>Continue to encourage farmers to appreciate the importance of body condition score (BCS) management as a driver for dairy cow welfare</li> <li>Development of feeding-related webinars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RTA Dairy data on both nutrition plans and BCS</li> <li>Review of numbers registered on professional registers such as the AIC Feed advisor register, the Association for Nutrition (AfN) Nutritionist Register or the BSAS Feed advisor records</li> <li>AHDB Dairy resource uptake and implementation</li> <li>Feed company data</li> <li>Dedicated supply chain data</li> </ul>	RTA Dairy	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Calf and heifer rearing	Improve the survival rate of youngstock and increase % of calves that make it into the milking herd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All farmers recording reasons for death/culling of youngstock, as part of the herd health plan</li> <li>Establish an industry benchmark for survivability</li> <li>Increase awareness and support youngstock survival rate and thrift to first service through a package of measures</li> <li>Undertake British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) data analysis on heifer survival</li> <li>A coordinated industry approach on knowledge transfer on best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHDB Dairy resources uptake and implementation</li> <li>BCMS</li> <li>MRO and other industry data sources</li> <li>RTA Dairy Welfare Outcome measures of calf survivability when available</li> </ul>	Holstein UK	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Improving welfare through breeding programmes	Improving farmers knowledge of genetic information and resources and how this can be used to benefit the welfare of the herd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater industry promotion and understanding of selection indices and fitness traits</li> <li>Encourage the recording of sire ID on passports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breeding organisations</li> <li>AHDB Dairy Breeding uptake and implementation</li> <li>Breed societies/MRO's</li> </ul>	AHDB Dairy	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>
Cow comfort with the aim of allowing the cow to satisfy important behavioural needs	Ensuring that the 'cow environment' is appropriate for the needs of the cow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development and implementation of key 'comfort' indicators and promote widely in the sector</li> <li>Promotion of AHDB Dairy resources</li> <li>Development of an injury assessment resource to guide farmers in identifying the causes of injury to the cattle.</li> <li>Promotion of clear and consistent messages on cow flow, feeder design, stock densities and the importance of hygienic and comfortable lying areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RTA Dairy</li> <li>Aggregated retailer data</li> <li>RSPCA</li> <li>AHDB Dairy</li> </ul>	RSPCA	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Preparing for the future	To ensure the skill set of people working on and with dairy farms is such that it improves dairy cow welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up-skilling livestock managers, stockmen and advisors through a range of mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dairy Pro – Undergraduate focus</li> <li>Landex</li> <li>BCVA CPD</li> <li>Lantra activities</li> <li>RTA data when available</li> </ul>	AHDB Dairy	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
	Industry can clearly demonstrate the responsible use of medicines that maintain their availability in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the importance of appropriate anti-microbial use via the promotion of the RUMA guidance</li> <li>Adopting a consistent approach to responsible anti-microbial use</li> <li>AHDB to lead industry initiative in constructing a platform to collate and share health data across the industry</li> <li>Support RUMA in establishing how best to quantify and demonstrate responsible use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Office for Animal Health (NOAH)</li> <li>Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD)</li> <li>RUMA</li> <li>BCVA CPD and individual practices conducting training for their customers</li> <li>Coordinated industry messages and actions</li> <li>AHDB Dairy</li> </ul>	NFU	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Industry coordination	To ensure that the industry collaborates effectively for the welfare benefit of the dairy cow Reports over time demonstrate a positive 'welfare trend' and provide a basis for future investment and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry actions and responsibilities clearly defined and coordinated</li> <li>Annually review and publically report progress towards aspirations</li> <li>Encourage a greater level of collaborative activity to maximise potential progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports coordinated and provided by responsible industry parties</li> <li>Reviews of progress undertaken through the delivery timetable</li> </ul>	CHAWG	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>