

GB Dairy Cattle Welfare Strategy 2018–2020



The British dairy industry prides itself on being a pioneer in dairy cattle welfare. It remains a top priority for the sector and our farmers take the lead to develop and enforce the highest animal welfare standards on our farms.



Animal welfare relates to an animal's physical health and mental wellbeing, which is largely influenced by factors covered in this strategy.

Progress to date

The first dairy cow welfare strategy was launched in 2010, in recognition that as a sector – though we have progressed substantially – there was still much to do to improve the welfare of dairy cows in GB. The Cattle Health and Welfare Group (CHAWG) has taken the responsibility for the coordination and delivery of this strategy. Part of this responsibility is reporting on the progress the sector has made. A progress summary was published in 2011 and 2012. In 2014, an in-depth review of the welfare strategy was undertaken to incorporate new priorities.

Detailed reports on the progress made by the GB dairy sector in relation to cattle welfare were published in 2012, 2014 and 2016 (see www.CHAWG.org.uk). They provide evidence of the industry's proactive approach to welfare improvement.

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In this revised strategy, you will see a number of priorities have been expanded on. This demonstrates that we are constantly developing what we do and aiming to be more ambitious. The GB Dairy Cattle Welfare Strategy is dedicated to improving the welfare of dairy cattle by raising the bar for the entire dairy industry and creating a culture of continuous review and

improvement. It is driven by science, developed and refined through expert perspective and consensus among farmers and veterinarians, as well as other experts in the supply chain. Progress against the strategy will be reported as part of the Cattle Health and Welfare Report for Great Britain in 2018 and 2020.



Industry initiatives

A variety of industry activities promoting greater engagement in mobility and improvements in foot health of the nation's dairy cows is having a positive impact, resulting in a **downturn in lameness levels**. There continues to be year-on-year improvement in udder health performance, with an increasing percentage of British dairy cows receiving proactive **mastitis control**.

Industry consensus and harmonisation on a range of **welfare outcome measures** has assisted with the

successful roll-out and uptake of these measures as part of farm assurance schemes (Red Tractor Assurance, Soil Association Certification and RSPCA Assured).

The **retention of bull calves** on-farm remains high and a number of industry initiatives continue to champion improvements in calf health, welfare and survival. There is still room for improvement and we will continue to challenge ourselves to keep progressing in these areas.

CHAWG Dairy Cattle Welfare Subgroup

The Dairy Cattle Welfare Subgroup is a subdivision of the CHAWG which focuses on all aspects of cattle welfare applicable to the GB dairy industry. It is paramount that the dairy welfare strategy acknowledges and addresses the diverse production methods within the industry.

The Subgroup aims to reach a consensus on the key cattle welfare issues to be addressed and to deliver against the GB Dairy Cattle Welfare Strategy.

The aim is to develop workable strategies and initiatives to address the key priorities identified.

The Subgroup may identify the need for research to fill knowledge gaps and make recommendations to the CHAWG for further action.

The group has refined the strategy to eight priority areas in dairy cattle welfare. These areas are lameness, calves & youngstock, welfare outcomes, cow's environment, promoting higher welfare, mastitis, fertility & breeding and body condition.

The purpose of this Subgroup is to achieve consensus on the key welfare issues to be investigated and fulfil the actions set out in the strategy as shown on the fold-out plan for 2018–2020.



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

Cattle Health and Welfare Group

E: info@chawg.org.uk

For more detailed information about the further work and progress of this group, visit our website at: www.chawg.org.uk



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Key		Short-term deliverable (1–2 years)
		Medium-term deliverable (2–4 years)
		Long-term deliverable (3–5 years)

Priority	Aspiration	Actions	Evidence source	Coordinated by	By when
Lameness	Reduce the prevalence of lameness, leading to improved welfare	- Improve prevention, recognition, treatment and control - Continue to implement mobility scoring as the industry-recognised lameness indicator - Identify and communicate the availability of relevant support ‘programmes’ and encourage uptake - Support the activities of the National Association of Cattle Foot Trimmers (NACFT), Register of Cattle Foot Trimmers (ROCFT), the Cattle Hoof Care Standards Board and the Register of Mobility Scorers (ROMS) - Promote anti-inflammatory (pain relief) treatment in cases of lameness	- AHDB Dairy Healthy Feet programme - Foot trimming organisations (NACFT, ROCFT, Cattle Hoof Care Standards Board) - Register of Mobility Scorers - Milk recording organisations - Farm assurance schemes - Researchers - Milk buyers and retailers - Veterinary practices	Dairy Cattle Mobility Steering Group	
Calves and youngstock	Improve the survival and growth rate of youngstock and increase % of calves that make it into the milking herd Increase the % of dairy bull calves retained in the industry	- Raise awareness to farmers for the need to improve calf management through joined-up KE activity - Ensure all calves are managed across the supply chain to meet agreed industry practices and standards - Promote enhanced feeding programmes of youngstock - All farmers to record - Stillborn calves - Reasons for death/culling of youngstock - Encourage regular monitoring of growth rates - Encourage selection of polled sires to replace disbudding - Encourage uptake of appropriate use of sexed semen to reduce the number of male calves - Encourage the use of pain relief (analgesics) during castration and disbudding - Encourage development of markets for dairy bull calves such as bull beef and rose veal - Encourage proactive calf health planning	- AHDB Dairy Calf to Calving Initiative - Breeding organisations - British Cattle Movement Scheme (BCMS) - Calf rearing companies - Milk recording organisations - Farm assurance schemes - Milk buyers and retailers	AHDB	
Welfare outcomes	Evaluate animal-based welfare outcome measures on-farm	- Support the activities of assurance schemes that observe and record welfare outcome measures - Encourage farmers and vets to discuss welfare outcome measures as part of the herd health plan review	- Farm assurance schemes - Milk buyers and retailers - Veterinary practices		
Cow's environment	Ensure the comfort of the environment is appropriate to meet the needs of the cow	- Assess the extent of implementation of key ‘comfort’ indicators in practice and promote further as necessary - Analyse gaps on resources currently available; develop and promote resources as appropriate - Develop clear and consistent messages on cow flow, feeder design, stock densities and the importance of hygienic and comfortable lying areas - Demonstrate continuous improvement in cow comfort	- AHDB Dairy - Farm assurance schemes - Farm consultancies - Milk buyers and retailers - Veterinary practices	RSPCA	
Continuous welfare improvement	Demonstrate a positive ‘welfare trend’ and provide a basis for future investment and activity	- Demonstrate current high levels of welfare and continually strive for improvement - Regularly review and publicly report progress towards aspirations - Raise awareness of dairy cow welfare as a relevant issue for dairy farmers’ businesses - Encourage investment in projects dedicated to advancing dairy cattle welfare practices - Support research and activities in promoting welfare - Promote the current high levels of welfare to consumers through education and awareness-raising activities	- AHDB Dairy - Milk buyers and retailers - Farm assurance schemes	NFU	
Mastitis	Improve udder health, leading to a reduction in mastitis and improved welfare	- Encourage and promote active prevention, recognition and control of mastitis - Incorporate mastitis control in herd health plans - Publish year-on-year udder health data - Publish numbers of farms and cows that have received mastitis control through an industry mastitis improvement programme - Communicate and encourage uptake of best practice dry cow management	- AHDB Dairy Mastitis Control Plan - Farm consultancies - Milk buyers and retailers - Milk recording organisations - Farm assurance schemes - Veterinary practices	Mastitis Control Steering Group	
Body condition	Cows at an appropriate body condition for stage of lactation	- Provide greater access for farmers, farm staff and advisers to cow nutritional information - Continue to encourage farmers to appreciate the importance of body condition score (BCS) management as a driver for dairy cow nutrition - Evaluate, coordinate, promote knowledge and effective protocols for improving nutrition on-farm - Continue to promote best practice transition cow management - Increase the number of professionally registered nutritionists	- AIC - Dedicated supply chain data - Feed adviser register - Farm assurance schemes	aic agricultural industries confederation	
Fertility and breeding	Move positively towards a calving interval of 400 days	- Liaise with industry to access fertility data that can be aggregated and reported annually - Promote genetic indices and tools that support informed breeding decisions via the industry - Evaluate, coordinate, promote knowledge and effective protocols for improving fertility on-farm	- Breed societies - Farm consultancies - Milk recording organisations - National bovine data centre - Veterinary practices	NBDC NATIONAL BOVINE DATA CENTRE	