

When expert opinion is used the expert should meet a pre-determined level of independence from relevant stakeholder interests and their expertise should be externally validated, for example, through qualification and peer review”.

**Evidence and the Welfare of Farmed Animals. Part 1: The Evidence Base** (June 2014). A4, 40 pages. Farm Animal Welfare Committee. Available from the following website: [www.defra.gov.uk/fawc](http://www.defra.gov.uk/fawc), or by contacting FAWC at the following address: FAWC, Area 5E, Nobel House, London SW1 3JR, UK.

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## Overview of cattle health and welfare in Great Britain

The Cattle Health and Welfare Group (CHAWG) have recently published a second Report on the health and welfare of beef and dairy cattle in Great Britain (the first Report was published in 2012). CHAWG is an industry-led organisation that seeks to inform and represent the interests of both the beef and dairy sectors throughout Great Britain. Its members include Government bodies (from England, Wales and Scotland), charity organisations, and industry groups, amongst others. CHAWG primarily concentrates its efforts on four key areas: Farm Health Planning; Surveillance and Monitoring; Bovine Viral Diarrhoea; and Dairy Cow Welfare (CHAWG is responsible for delivering and co-ordinating the Dairy Cow Welfare Strategy).

The beef and dairy industries use a significant number of animals; according to CHAWG there are approximately 4,823,000 beef cattle on 65,000 premises and 3,168,000 dairy cattle, on 27,000 premises in Great Britain (June 2013 figures). The health and welfare concerns for both beef and dairy cattle are similar and, as in their previous Report, CHAWG list the top nine conditions: Bovine Tuberculosis; Bovine Viral Diarrhoea; calf pneumonia and scour; fertility; genetics; Johne's disease; mastitis; nutrition; and parasites. Conditions which are sector-specific are lameness (mainly dairy) and Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (mainly beef). An economic impact estimate is also given alongside each concern, where available, eg the cost of Johne's disease to the industry is estimated to be £13 million.

Surveillance and monitoring of disease is given a high priority within the Report and the work of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), which is responsible for much of the surveillance work carried out in England and Wales, is discussed, specifically the latest scanning surveillance approach that has been put forward by the AHVLA, including the core features of the restructured model. Also mentioned is the work of the Strategic Management Board in Scotland (the body responsible for veterinary surveillance in Scotland).

CHAWG go on to discuss emerging health and disease threats over the past two years, such as an increase in bovine fasciolosis due to excessive rainfall, a decrease in Salmonellosis, and the ever-present threat of antimicrobial resistance. A

notable welfare issue picked up on through surveillance activity in recent years was abomasal or digestive disorders in calves fed milk once a day. This led to Defra clarifying with the European Commission that calves should be fed liquid food twice a day for the first four weeks of life.

Horizon scanning is also considered and a number of specific possible disease threats mentioned, including: Foot and mouth disease from the Middle East and North Africa; Bluetongue from mainland Europe; Lumpy skin disease from the Middle East; BVD type 2c from mainland Europe; and Bovine psoroptic mange from Wales. Other potential threats are then discussed, such as: climate change and anomalous weather events; anti-microbial resistance; recycled manure solids ('green bedding') used for cattle bedding; use of recycled waste; and changes to EU legislation.

The Report also covers the changes in the Red Tractor dairy cattle standards (which were updated in October 2013). One of the changes involves a modification to the assessment process; it will now be required when visiting a farm that the assessor scores ten cows against the following welfare outcomes: mobility; body condition; hair loss, lesions, swellings; and cleanliness. It is hoped that dairy cow welfare will be improved with these new measures and it is anticipated that the Red Tractor beef and lamb schemes will be similarly updated during 2014.

Breeding and genetics is the next subject considered within the Report and the changes in Estimated Breeding Values (for beef) and Profitable Lifetime Index (for dairy cows) are discussed. DairyCo plan to refine the Profitable Lifetime Index for dairy cows during August 2014, and the weighting of production traits (currently 45.2%) will be reduced to approximately one-third, and the weighting of fitness traits will be increased, including new measures: calving ease (both maternal and direct) and maintenance.

The final sections of the Report consider: culling and mortality; nutrition, transition and metabolism; fertility, udder health and mobility; young-stock; parasites; infectious diseases; handling and slaughter; and use of medicines. As in the previous Report, much of the focus is on production figures and economic impact when discussing conditions affecting beef and dairy cattle; however, there seems to be a gradually increasing inclusion of welfare when compared to the 2012 Report.

CHAWG round off the Report with eight conclusions under the following headings: Greater collaboration within the sectors to promote alignment; Animal Health GB as a concept; Performance criteria for industry initiatives; AHVLA evolution; Purchased stock and cattle movements; Changing weather patterns; Food chain information data; Animal Health and Welfare Board for England.

**Second Report on the Health and Welfare of Beef and Dairy Cattle in Great Britain** (July 2014). A4, 57 pages. GB Cattle Health and Welfare Group. Available for download from the Cattle Health and Welfare Group website: [www.chawg.org.uk](http://www.chawg.org.uk).

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