

# Update on Veterinary Issues

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Farm Animal Welfare Council

British Cattle Veterinary Association

# Farm Animal Welfare Council

- 1<sup>st</sup> report on Dairy Cattle 1997
- 2<sup>nd</sup> report (Opinion) 2009
- Good Welfare
  - Fit and feeling good
- 5 Freedoms
  - Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
  - Freedom from discomfort
  - Freedom from pain, injury and disease
  - Freedom from fear and distress
  - Freedom to express normal behaviour

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	1997	2008	Change
Number of Cows	2.4 M	1.9 M	↓20%
Number of Dairy Farms	28400	16200	↓43%
Average Herd Size	93	126	↑20%
Yield (litres)	4974	6908	↑28%
Life Span (lactations)	3.3	3.6	↑9%

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- 1997 report made 190 recommendations
  - Concerns over endemic disease
    - » Lameness
    - » Mastitis
    - » Infertility

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# 2009 Opinion was based on evidence gathered

- Breeding
- Endemic disease
- Metabolic disease
- Injuries
- Infertility
- Lifespan
- Stockmanship

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# Endemic Disease

Lameness – major reason for premature culling  $\approx$  10%

## Causes

- Pain and distress
- Reduced yield
- Reduced fertility
- Increased costs

50% of all cows are lame once a year

21% of all cows are lame today

5% Farmers' recognition of lameness

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# Economic effects of lameness

Fertility	39%
Reduced yield	24%
Culling	24%
Medicines	10%
Labour	2%
Vet	1%

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# Incidence of foot lesions

Number of cases / 100 cows / year

Digital Dermatitis	1.7%
White line disease	5.6%
Sole ulcer	7.2%
Other digital lesions	6.2%

Cost of lameness for average herd / year  $\approx$  £7500

0.97pence per litre

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# Effect of lameness on the calving to conception interval

	Extension in days
Digital Dermatitis	20
White line disease	30
Sole ulcer	40
General lameness	8.9



# Locomotion Scores

- Encouragement from Industry
- Twice a year survey of herd
  - 0 - Not lame
  - 1 - Not lame – imperfect mobility
  - 2 - Mildly lame
  - 3 - Lame

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# Endemic Disease

## Mastitis

- Most common disease of Dairy Cows
- 9% of culls
- 20-40% of all cows have mastitis / year
- Somatic Cell Counts vary
  - Average 100,000 – 250,000
- Increased 30% since 1998
- Subclinical mastitis ↑
- Clinical Mastitis ≈

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# Mastitis Costs

- Mild cases            £169
- Severe                £469
- Fatal                  £1709

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# Endemic Disease

- Others:
  - TB
  - Johne's
  - BVD
  - IBR
  - Blue Tongue
  - Foot and Mouth

All cause increase culling

- Need for BIOSECURITY

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# Metabolic Disease

- Milk Fever
- Acetonaemia / Ketosis
- Left Displaced Abomasum

All low incidence (1%)

Attention to diet and management

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# Injuries

- Reduction in teat injuries since 1997
- Commonest injuries
  - Hock lesions
  - Bone injuries
  - Calluses on neck
- Survey by SAC of 10,800 cows

	Autumn	Spring
Hock Lesions	8.8%	40%

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# Infertility

- Conception rate falling by 1% every 3 years
- Now  $\leq 35\%$
- Main reason for involuntary culling
- Not a welfare problem
- Often a reflection of energy intake
- Management is very important
  - Dry cow
  - 1<sup>st</sup> lactation heifers – 20% never calve again
- Stockmanship
  - Reduction in skilled labour
  - Use of foreign labour

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# Lifespan

- Increased since 1997; now  $\approx$  6 years
  - 3.3 lactations  $\rightarrow$  3.6 lactations
  - Calving interval increased 384  $\rightarrow$  410
- Potentially a cow can live 12 years or more
- Main influence is voluntary vs. Involuntary culling
- Economics often drive voluntary culling
- Reasons for culling should be recorded



# Future

- Herd Health and Welfare Plans
- A measure of welfare could be:

Ratio of voluntary : involuntary culling

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