



## Welcome to Ruminant Health & Welfare

Welcome to the latest issue of the RH&W newsletter.

This month has seen an influx of congresses and conferences centred around animal health. This included [BCVA, SVS autumn conference](#) and the annual '[Healthy Animal – Healthy Environment](#)' conference which highlighted the importance of tackling endemic diseases to combat climate emissions - a key area of focus for RH&W.

The Healthy Animal event included a seminar by Dr Philip Skuce who worked with us earlier in the year to produce the '[Acting on methane](#)' report. Spreading the message about how reducing methane emissions, by improving animal health is crucial, and seeing it discussed by so many industry leaders was valuable.

We had a productive meeting with Nick Perkins, president of the [Goat Veterinary Society](#), and other key members of the goat sector to discuss how RH&W can expand its reach to support the improvement of goat health and welfare standards. The discussions were highly positive, and we look forward to beginning full implementation of goat-focused projects for the group in the new year.

As ever, please do get in touch with your thoughts or feedback via [secretary@ruminanthw.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ruminanthw.org.uk)

With best wishes,

Nigel Miller  
Chair, RH&W

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### **Flying the flag for health and welfare**

Chair, Nigel Miller, wrote a letter to Farmers Weekly earlier this month highlighting the importance of ruminant health and welfare.

In his [letter](#), Mr Miller called on governments across the UK to make livestock health – and in particular, tackling endemic diseases – a priority.

He said tackling endemic diseases, such as sheep scab and bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), would not only provide production and welfare gains for farmers, but also reduce their costs – both financially and in terms of carbon emissions.

Mr Miller also used the letter to call on governments for continued research funding, which has been instrumental in the development of diagnostics and vaccines.

**Why not join the conversation on Twitter? Follow and tag us @ruminanthw**



### Calf trial study and webinar

RH&W vice-chair, Gwyn Jones, is chairing a webinar on an important farm trial that has looked at improving the viability and generating more value from calves born to dairy cross-bred cows for the beef supply chain.

The webinar, which forms part of [GB Calf Week](#), will take place on Friday 18 November from 9.30am to 10.30am.

The panel includes Richard Phelps from meat processor ABP who has been involved with the project and dairy farmer, Chris James who has a spring block calving X-bred herd and is also looking at better genetics in order to increase viability and value.

They will highlight the findings so far, and the importance of genetics and confirmation in realising value in calves from cross-bred cows.

To register to take part for free, [click here](#).

### GB Calf Week 2022

The dairy industry's second GB Calf Week will take place from **16 to 23 November**. A series of on-farm and virtual events will take place during this one-week campaign, which celebrates the progress made in the industry's commitment to ensuring all dairy-bred calves are reared

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with care and for a purpose as part of dairy or beef supply chains.

This is a chance to participate in a series of dedicated webinars and farm walks, each of which focuses on one of the three key themes:

- Genetic selection with a focus on sexed and beef semen
- Breeding the right carcass for the right outlet
- Calf thermal comfort, and feeding for growth and optimal health

#### Get involved

- [Find out more about GB Calf week and register for events](#)
- Follow and engage in the conversation on social media by using the hashtag [#GBCalfWeek](#) & tagging [@Ruminanthw](#)
- Follow [@Ruminanthw](#) [@NFU\\_Dairy](#) and [@AHDB\\_Dairy](#) to keep up-to-date
- Find out more about the GB Dairy Calf Strategy [online](#)



#### Medicine Hub update

RH&W vice-chair, Gwyn Jones, has recently been appointed chairman of an industry group tasked with driving forward recommendations for a national farm ruminant antibiotic use database.

Mr Jones will chair the industry governance and ownership group of the [Medicine Hub](#) – an online tool to help beef, sheep and dairy farmers monitor and compare medicine use and tackle the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

The group will oversee the implementation of a strategy plan, agreed in June, to develop the Medicine Hub into a national dataset on farm antibiotic use across the UK which will provide the evidence to back up the great story we have to tell in the UK and assist with exporting opportunities.

The strategy plan for the Hub states that work is needed to enable data on antibiotic use – whether that be from a farmer or vet – to be easily transferred to the Hub, and for the data on the Hub to be accepted as a legally held medicines record.



## **Welfare strategy update - dairy cattle vision**

During a recent steering group meeting RH&W members agreed a new, proposed vision for the updated Dairy Cattle Welfare strategy.

Creating a new welfare strategy for dairy cattle is a key priority for RH&W with plans also in place to develop specific sheep and beef welfare strategies.

### **The vision**

*By 2028, the UK is able to demonstrate, through a functioning evidence base, progress in tackling six key areas of dairy cattle welfare. This progress will be instrumental in the UK achieving status among world leaders in dairy cattle welfare. The six areas are: robust and viable animals; mobile cows; comfortable cows; appropriately nourished cows; healthy udders; and behavioural welfare.*

### **Why this vision and why now?**

The UK dairy industry has traditionally had a positive reputation for leading on farm animal welfare but more and more, the sector is facing challenges over standards, greenhouse gas emissions and resource use. In addition, globally, other countries such as New Zealand and Australia have placed major emphasis on raising their dairy welfare standards.

Historically the focus for the UK dairy industry has predominantly been on health, however the same level of input and focus needs to be put on welfare. Health is a subset of welfare; a cow cannot have welfare without health, and vice versa.

[Research](#) shows that the general public expects good welfare as much as they expect high standards of animal health – we must therefore focus on ensuring both good health and welfare standards. and therefore, our focus and vision must broaden to meet these challenges.

Raising the health and welfare standards associated with UK-derived dairy produce will allow producers from the four nations to differentiate themselves, and their products, from other countries who may seek to challenge our position.

All of this means we need to ensure our vision for dairy cattle welfare is up-to-date and fit to take us forwards as a UK industry, so we can continue to be associated with excellent, positive welfare, helping the wider supply chain to develop and strengthen.

We will provide updates on the progression of the dairy cattle welfare strategy, as it is developed, in future newsletters.

**[Vaccine storage best practice #FridgeCheck](#)**

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Vaccines, and their storage, is a key focus area for disease prevention on farms. The length of time vaccines are stored on a farm, as well as the temperature of the fridge they are stored in, can have a major impact on their efficacy when administered. The standard storage temperature for ruminant vaccines should be 2-8 degrees Celsius to enable them to remain stable and undamaged before administration.

A [study conducted by MSD](#) in 2018 found that out of 1,832 farmers surveyed, more than half were unaware of the correct temperature to store vaccines at. The survey also found that 8% would still use a vaccine if it had previously been frozen, and 50% either never, or only occasionally, checked the temperature of their vaccine fridges.

It is recommended, where possible, that vaccines are not stored on-farm. However, this often isn't a viable option especially when vaccinating large numbers of animals at the same time. Therefore, when looking to store vaccines on-farm, try and keep them in a vaccine-only fridge, which is correctly sealed and has no freezer compartment.

**Some additional vaccine #FridgeCheck top tips are:**

- Have a separate, stable electricity source/plug for the fridge, and label the plug with 'do not unplug'
- Monitor the temperature daily, ensuring it remains between 2 and 8 degrees
- Use a cool bag when transporting vaccines from one location to another
- Only remove vaccines from the fridge when you are ready to use them
- Place vaccines in the middle of the fridge where the temperature is most stable



**Endemic disease focus - Sheep scab**

During 2021, RH&W conducted a survey to determine which priority endemic diseases the dairy, beef and sheep sectors really wanted and needed to tackle. A number of disease effecting ruminants were identified as having a significant impact on production and welfare. One of the top disease identified by the sheep sector was sheep scab.

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In recent years the sheep sector has seen an increase in cross-nation, coordinated efforts to eradicate scab in the national flock. Despite increased legislative support and advice from industry bodies such as [SCOPS](#) and [Moredun](#), sheep scab rates still remain present across the four nations.

An example of one successful initiative with 100% farmer participation is a scheme based on the Shetland Isles. The [Shetland Animal Health Scheme](#) focuses on enhancing the health status of the island's ruminants.

The scheme implements a routine treatment protocol for all imported sheep entering the islands. In addition, all sheep are screened for sheep scab to allow for monitoring of treatment efficacy. Since the implementation of these processes, Shetland's flock has remained scab free. Although this may be on a smaller scale than four nations, it shows that with complete commitment it is possible to dramatically reduce, if not eradicate the threat of sheep scab.

Find out more about scab eradication programmes and information in your nation:

- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [England](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)

### **Methane report reminder**

The 'Acting on methane' report is a great source of information for having conversations about emissions from ruminants. It discusses how we can reduce the carbon intensity of production, and in turn emissions, by focussing on conditions which impact food conversion efficiency, growth rates and the involuntary or premature culling of breeding stock.

You can find the full report [here](#).

### Upcoming events

[Hybu Cig Cymru / Meat Promotion Wales Annual Conference](#) – 10 Nov

[Delivering the Future of farming, AHDB](#) – 10 Nov

[Sheep breeders round table](#), Northamptonshire – 11 to 13 Nov

[AgriScot](#) – 16 Nov

[Total Dairy, Stratford-Upon-Avon](#) – 23 & 24 Nov