

DAIRY COW WELFARE

The BVA is encouraged by the advances which have been made by the dairy industry in addressing welfare issues but feel that further progress is required.

- The BVA believes that veterinary surgeons must continue to take an active role in the promotion of welfare on dairy farms and the education of farmers.
- Whilst improvements have been seen in some areas concerning the welfare of dairy cows, e.g. the longevity of animals, issues related to lameness, mastitis, housing and infectious disease remain areas of concern.
- The BVA believes that veterinary surgeons should work with farmers at individual farm level to formulate a 'Herd Welfare Plan', which could be written in parallel with their 'Farm Health Plan'.
- The BVA acknowledges that there have been moves within the farming industry which place a greater importance on non-production traits (longevity, fertility, somatic cell count and locomotion) when breeding dairy cows. However it is recommended that farmers should consult with their veterinary surgeons to devise a suitable breeding plan if particular welfare concerns are identified within a herd.
- The BVA acknowledges that housing the modern dairy cow can be a significant challenge to UK dairy farmers; however much can be done to existing buildings to achieve the high welfare standards which good housing can provide.
- The BVA believes that the impact of TB on cow welfare should not be underestimated. Not only are alarming numbers of cows being slaughtered each year as reactors, but the health and welfare of animals is potentially at risk on farms placed under movement restrictions.
- The BVA supports retailers who reward farmers financially for improving welfare standards for dairy cows and their calves.