

North Kesteven District Council Planning Committee
c/o District Council Offices
Kesteven Street
Sleaford
Lincs
NG34 7EF

19 March 2010

Dear Councillors,

Nocton Dairies Ltd. Planning Application

The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the United Kingdom and represents over 12,000 members. Our chief interest is to protect and promote the interests of the veterinary profession in this country and we therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the veterinary profession, be they animal health, animal welfare, public health or employment concerns.

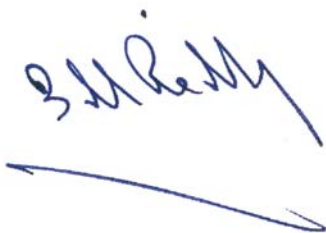
The planning application by Nocton Dairies Ltd. was raised at the recent meeting of the BVA Ethic and Welfare Group. The group agreed that the health and welfare of the animals involved was paramount as opposed to the size of the herd. The design of the cattle buildings will have a direct impact on the health and welfare of the herd therefore we would encourage the Council to seek specialist help in this area when considering the application.

In addition, the BVA suggests that North Kesteven Council should seek veterinary advice on the potential impact of animal disease outbreaks on such a large holding, when undertaking an Environmental Risk Assessment.

In addition, you may wish to be aware of our position statement on dairy cow welfare which is attached to this letter at Annex A.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Prof William Reilly
BVA President

Annex A

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.