

Farm news



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Dairy Wellness Profit – A New Genomic Index from the USA

An animal's health has the greatest single influence on lifetime profitability. With advances in genomic technology, it is now possible to select for heifers that are going to, on average, be healthier than heifers that have not been selected.

Not all heifers are born the same



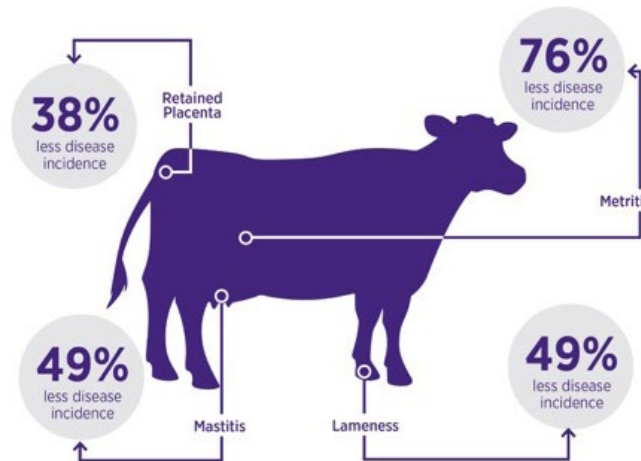
On average, it costs £1918 to raise a heifer to calving and not all heifers recoup their rearing costs.

Dairy Wellness Profit™ (DWP) is a new genomic index that incorporates health and wellness traits in addition to production traits. DWP incorporates 6 adult cow health traits (ketosis, displaced abomasum, retained placenta, metritis, mastitis and lameness) and 3 calf health traits (mortality, scours and respiratory disease). These conditions were chosen because they are the most common and most financially significant diseases on a dairy unit. DWP is a financial index based on the actual cost of these diseases. For each individual trait, the midpoint for DWP is around 100; higher numbers equate to a lower risk of disease. The normal range is around 80–120.

A demonstration study illustrating the effectiveness of wellness trait predictions in 11 commercial Holstein herds was conducted in a population of 2,875 female US Holsteins, which were sampled prior to calving. Cows in the top 25% of the herds for the genetic predictions for each trait were, on average, over twice as likely to stay healthy. A complimentary study has also been conducted in

the UK to document the effectiveness of the wellness traits on UK farms. This was a retrospective study involving multiple sites, years, seasons and animals with completed performance records available, with up to 728 animals being included in individual wellness trait analysis. The UK trial showed very similar results to the US study which means that we can be confident that DWP will also work in the UK.

On UK farms the difference between the top third and the bottom third:



In summary, although the heritability of health and fitness traits are generally lower than production traits, the amount of data behind the DWP index means that reliabilities of around 50% can be achieved. This makes DWP a very compelling index to use either alongside or instead of PLI when selecting dairy heifers.

DWP is exclusive to CLARIFIDE® Plus genomic testing which is available from Scarsdale Vets.

For more information call our practice on **01332 294929** or email farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com



Tips For Housing Cattle

Charlie Mays BVetMed MRCVS



Bringing the cows home signifies the change in seasons; housing cattle is a great opportunity to get hands on and give the cows an MOT!

So what should we actually be doing? Here are some top tips for housing your cattle this winter:

1. Is your housing ready?

It is essential you assess the quality of accommodation available for your cattle. Many common problems of housed cattle arise due to structural issues with the sheds. Now is the time to make alterations if you can. For example, fresh air flow is essential to avoid pneumonia - are there side panels you can remove or top rows of breeze blocks that could come out to increase air flow? Cattle in well ventilated sheds perform better; fact. It is equally important to be able to avoid a breeze, particularly at low level to protect the young stock from chills.

The size of your sheds is also an imperative factor. Overcrowding increases spread of disease and there must be enough lying/feeding space. 10m² per cow is a reasonable aspiration for modern housing of which 3-3.5m will be lying space.

If you have cubicle housing, it is suggested you have 10% more cubicles than cows, but at a bare minimum there should be one for each cow.

2. Slurry management

Slurry needs to be kept to a minimum with frequent scraping or slatted passageways. Cubicle beds should be cleaned daily, and bedding replaced as necessary in order to keep the bed clear of muck. If feet are standing in slurry and moisture, they become softer and at increased risk of lameness including, Digital Dermatitis and claw horn diseases.

3. Adequate feed and water space

Considerations to feed face space is essential for housed cattle. Bullying is very common, and studies have shown this reduces by up to 57% when the recommendations below are achieved.

Feed space recommendations for dairy cattle:

Cow weight (kg)	Simultaneous feeding (m)	Ad-lib feeding (m)
350	0.55	0.15
400	0.55	0.17
450	0.55	0.19
500	0.55	0.22
550	0.55	0.24
600	0.60	0.26
650	0.65	0.28
700	0.70	0.30
750	0.75	0.32

Feed space recommendations for beef cattle:

Recommended feed space	Suckler cows	Finishing cattle	Light store cattle	Weanlings
Ad-lib roughage	300-400mm	300-350mm	250-300mm	225-300mm
Restricted roughage	600-700mm	600-650mm	500-600mm	400-500mm
Concentrates/roots	600-700mm	600-650mm	500-600mm	400-500mm

Cows should feed with heads down as this encourages saliva production and you will get more out of your feed. Troughs should be clean and smooth to avoid damage to cow's mouth/tongue. You should also ensure that any barriers are not inhibiting cows reach or creating pressure sores as this will affect feed intakes.

4. Parasite control

It is always best to seek veterinary advice for specific farm needs. However, housing is a great time to get on top of parasite burdens. It is always best to run a faecal egg count first before spending money on wormers if they are not necessary. Lungworm and Fluke require further testing but it is always economically advisable to diagnose an issue before treating as well as reducing the risk of resistance. Should animals need treating, the correct choice of treatment is essential to leave animals clean throughout the housing period. Right product, right time! For example, if a shed or group of animals has mites/lice, they should be treated at housing to avoid spread to the rest of the herd. However, if fluke is an issue, it is best to treat animals 6-8 weeks after housing so that you can hit all stages of the fluke lifecycle.

5. Vaccinations!

With closer contact between animals and reduced ventilation, combined with a potentially humid damp environment at housing this is a perfect combination for viruses to multiply and affect cattle. Check your vaccination protocol is up to date and animals are going into housing with maximum immunity. Prevention now before housing will save time and money on treatments when the cold weather arrives!

Farewell to Rob Howard!

We are very sorry to say goodbye to Rob after over 3 years at Scarsdale Vets. Rob is planning on seeing what life is like on the other side of the farm gate! We wish him all the best for the future.

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