


Policy Case-Study: Improve lameness in UK dairy cattle

1. Description of policy change	<p>The panel are asked to provide welfare assessment scores for two scenarios.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current dairy production with around 30% lameness score of 2 or more (i.e. 2 and 3) and 70% 0 or 1. (Randall et al., 2019 found an average herd lameness prevalence of 26% score 2 and 4% score 3).* 2. Lameness prevalence reduced to only 5% of dairy cows with scores 2 and 3.* <p>* See information on mobility scores and scoring at the bottom of the document. A voluntary payment scheme would be available which pays farmers who achieve below 5% of dairy cows with scores 2 or 3 in their herds.</p>
2. UK animal populations affected (species, systems, numbers)	Dairy cows and dairy youngstock
3. Current different main systems of production for that species	 <p>2022-06-01 Cattle Housing Data...</p> <p>* Please contact the Report authors should the link to these slides not work.</p>
4. Proportion of the different systems in the UK at current time and likely post-policy	<p>See slide above. Also “31% of farms maintained a traditional grazing system with no forage feeding indoors during the summer, whereas 38% of farmers indicated that all their milking cows received some feeding indoors during the summer. A system of housing dairy cows for 24 h/d while they are lactating was implemented by 8% of farms, whereas 1% of farms did not house their cows at any time of the year”</p> <p>https://www.journalofdairyscience.org/article/S0022-0302(14)00693-6/fulltext</p>
5. Likely impacts foreseen as a result of the policy change	<p>Reduced lameness. However, to achieve this farmers may undertake some of the following which may have a wider impact on welfare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early detection and prompt effective treatment • Regular mobility scoring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying lesions and monitoring horn conformation • Improving standing/ walking surfaces, such as field tracks, the collecting yard and at feed barriers • Improving lying areas • Upgrading housing e.g. slurry, flooring, handling facilities, improving cubicles to increase lying time • Improving the welfare of cattle at pasture e.g. tracks to fields, poaching • Appropriate use of footbaths • Routine foot trimming • Improved cow tracks • Reduce infection pressure • Gentle handling/good handling facilities e.g. reduce sharp corners • Good nutrition and monitoring body condition score • Appropriate housing for lame animals. e.g. moved to straw yard / hospital pen
6. Any linked recent policy changes (are there any other policy changes or policy directions which may also impact this same area?)	Small grants are available for items which help with lameness e.g. automated footbaths (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/annex-4-fetf-2023-animal-health-and-welfare-eligible-items#cattle)
7. Legal basis for current systems (of the system(s) under consideration) - e.g. if policy is for a change in stocking density, a statement of current regulation around stocking density	There are no legal requirements around lameness specifically, beyond the general requirements of the Animal Welfare Act to avoid unnecessary suffering.
8. Animal 'lifecycle' information specific to the system(s) under consideration – e.g relevant information on common management practices for the system(s) under discussion	From birth to slaughter.
9. Any other available detail about the policy change proposed (e.g. from a Defra policy appraisal)	See above

Mobility scoring

Mobility scoring is based on a scale from 0 to 3, with 0 being good mobility and 3 being severely impaired mobility.

Good mobility – Score 0

Description of cow behaviour

- Walks with even weight-bearing and rhythm on all four feet, with a flat back
- Long, fluid strides possible

Suggested actions

- Routine (preventative) foot-trimming when/if required
- Record mobility at next scoring session



Imperfect mobility – Score 1

Description of cow behaviour

- Steps uneven (rhythm or weight-bearing) or strides shortened; affected limb or limbs not immediately identifiable

Suggested actions

- Would benefit from routine (preventative) foot-trimming when/if required
- Further observation recommended



Impaired mobility – Score 2

Description of cow behaviour

- Uneven weight-bearing on a limb that is immediately identifiable and/or obviously shortened strides (usually with an arch to the centre of the back)

Suggested actions

- Lamé and requires prompt treatment
- Foot should be lifted to establish the cause of lameness before treatment
- Should be attended to as soon as practically possible



Severely impaired mobility – Score 3

Description of cow behaviour

- Unable to walk as fast as a brisk human pace (cannot keep up with the healthy herd)
- Lameness easy to identify – limping; may barely stand on lame leg(s); back arched when standing and walking
- Very lame

Suggested actions

- This cow is very lame and requires urgent attention, nursing and further professional advice
- Examine as soon as possible
- Cow will benefit from treatment
- Cow should not be made to walk far and kept on a straw yard or at grass
- In the most severe cases, culling may be the only possible solution



Source: AHDB

Reference

[Laura Vee Randall, Heather J Thomas, John G Remnant, Nicola J Bollard, Jon N Huxley](#) (2019) **Lameness prevalence in a random sample of UK dairy herds.** *Vet Record* 16 March 2019.