

CHAPTER 7.11.

ANIMAL WELFARE AND DAIRY CATTLE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Article 7.11.1.

Definition

Dairy cattle production systems are defined as all commercial cattle production systems where the purpose of the operation includes some or all of the breeding, rearing and management of cattle intended for production of milk.

Article 7.11.2.

Scope

This chapter addresses the welfare aspects of dairy cattle production systems.

Article 7.11.3.

Commercial dairy cattle production systems

Dairy cattle in commercial production may be kept in housed or pastured systems, or a combination of both:

1. Housed

These are systems where cattle are kept on a formed surface, indoors or outdoors, and are fully dependent on humans to provide for basic animal needs such as food, shelter and water. The type of housing will depend on the environment, climatic conditions and management system. The animals may be housed unrestrained or tethered, within this housing system.

2. Pastured

These are systems where cattle live outdoors, and have some autonomy over diet selection, water consumption and access to shelter. Pastured systems do not involve any housing except that required for milking.

3. Combination systems

These are systems where cattle are managed in any combination of housed and pasture production systems, either simultaneously, or varied in accordance with weather or physiological state of the cattle.

Article 7.11.4.

Criteria (or measurables) for the welfare of dairy cattle

The following outcome-based criteria, specifically animal-based criteria, can be useful indicators of *animal welfare*. Consideration should also be given to the design of the system and animal management practices. The use of these indicators and their appropriate thresholds should be adapted to the different situations where dairy cattle are managed. These criteria can be considered as a tool to monitor the impact of design and management, given that both of these can affect *animal welfare*.

1. Behaviour

Certain behaviours could indicate an *animal welfare* problem. These include decreased *feed* intake, altered locomotory behaviour and posture, altered lying time, altered respiratory rate and panting, coughing, shivering and huddling, excessive grooming and the demonstration of stereotypic, agonistic, depressive or other abnormal behaviours.

2. Morbidity rate

Morbidity rates, including for infectious and metabolic diseases, lameness, peri-partum and post-procedural complications and injury rates, above recognised thresholds, may be direct or indirect indicators of the *animal welfare* status of the whole *herd*. Understanding the aetiology of the disease or syndrome is important for detecting potential *animal welfare* problems. Mastitis, and hoof, reproductive and metabolic diseases are also particularly important animal health problems for adult dairy cows. Scoring systems, such as for body condition, lameness and milk quality, can provide additional information.

Both clinical examination and pathology should be utilised as an indicator of disease, injuries and other problems that may compromise *animal welfare*.

3. Mortality and culling rates

Mortality and culling rates affect the length of productive life and, like morbidity rates, may be direct or indirect indicators of the *animal welfare* status. Depending on the production system, estimates of mortality and culling rates can be obtained by analysing *death* and culling and their temporal and spatial patterns of occurrence. Mortality and culling, and their causes, should be recorded regularly, e.g. daily, monthly, annually or with reference to key husbandry activities within the production cycle.

Necropsy is useful in establishing the cause of *death*.

4. Changes in body weight, body condition and milk yield

In growing animals, body weight changes outside the expected growth rate, especially excessive sudden loss, are indicators of poor animal health or *animal welfare*. Future performance, including milk yield and fertility, of replacement heifers can be affected by under- or over-nutrition at different stages of rearing.

In lactating animals, body condition outside an acceptable range, significant body weight change and significant decrease in milk yield may be indicators of compromised welfare.

In non-lactating animals and bulls, body condition outside an acceptable range and significant body weight change may be indicators of compromised welfare.

5. Reproductive efficiency

Reproductive efficiency can be an indicator of animal health and *animal welfare* status. Poor reproductive performance, compared with the targets expected for a particular breed, can indicate *animal welfare* problems.

Examples may include:

- anoestrus or extended post-partum interval,
- low conception rates,
- high abortion rates,
- high rates of dystocia,
- retained placenta,
- metritis,
- loss of fertility in breeding bulls.

6. Physical appearance

Physical appearance may be an indicator of animal health and *animal welfare*, as well as the conditions of management. Attributes of physical appearance that may indicate compromised welfare include:

- presence of ectoparasites,
- abnormal coat colour, texture or hair loss,
- excessive soiling with faeces, mud or dirt (cleanliness),
- swellings, injuries or lesions,
- discharges (e.g. from nose, eyes, reproductive tract),
- feet abnormalities,
- abnormal posture (e.g. rounded back, head low),
- emaciation or dehydration.

7. Handling responses

Improper handling can result in fear and distress in cattle. Indicators include:

- evidence of poor human-animal relationship, such as excessive flight distance,
- negative behaviour at milking time, such as reluctance to enter the milking parlour, kicking, vocalisation,

- animals striking restraints or gates,
- injuries sustained during handling, such as bruising, lacerations, broken horns or tails and fractured legs,
- animals vocalising abnormally or excessively during restraint and handling,
- disturbed behaviour in the chute or race such as repeated reluctance to enter,
- animals slipping or falling.

8. Complications from common procedures

Surgical and non-surgical procedures may be performed in dairy cattle for facilitating management, improving human safety and *animal welfare* (e.g. disbudding, hoof trimming), and treatment of certain conditions (e.g. displaced abomasum). However, if these procedures are not performed properly, *animal welfare* can be compromised. Indicators of such problems could include:

- post procedure infection, swelling and pain behaviour,
- reduced *feed* and water intake,
- post procedure body condition and weight loss,
- morbidity and mortality.

Article 7.11.5.

Recommendations

Ensuring good welfare of dairy cattle is contingent on several management factors, including system design, environmental management, and animal management practices which include responsible husbandry and provision of appropriate care. Serious problems can arise in any system if one or more of these elements are lacking.

Articles 7.11.6. and 7.11.7. provide recommendations for measures applied to dairy cattle.

Each recommendation includes a list of outcome-based measurables derived from Article 7.11.4. This does not exclude other measures being used where appropriate.

Article 7.11.6.

Recommendations on system design and management including physical environment

When new facilities are planned or existing facilities are modified, professional advice on design in regards to animal welfare and health should be sought.

Many aspects of the environment can impact the welfare and health of dairy cattle. These include thermal environment, air quality, lighting, noise, etc.

1. Thermal environment

Although cattle can adapt to a wide range of thermal environments particularly if appropriate breeds are used for the anticipated conditions, sudden fluctuations in weather can cause heat or cold stress.

a) Heat stress

The risk of heat stress for cattle is influenced by environmental factors including air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, animal density (area and volume available per animal), shade availability, animal factors including breed, age, body condition, metabolic rate and stage of lactation, and coat colour and density.

Animal handlers should be aware of the risk that heat stress poses to cattle and of the thresholds in relation to heat and humidity that may require action. As conditions change, routine daily activities that require moving cattle should be amended appropriately. If the risk of heat stress reaches very high levels the *animal handlers*

should institute an emergency action plan that gives priority to access to additional water and could include provision of shade, fans, reduction of animal density, and provision of cooling systems as appropriate for the local conditions.

Outcome-based measurables: *feed* and water intake; behaviour, especially respiratory rate and panting; physical appearance, especially dehydration; morbidity rate; mortality rate; changes in milk yield.

b) Cold stress

Protection from extreme weather conditions should be provided when these conditions are likely to create a serious risk to the welfare of cattle, particularly in neonates and young cattle and others that are physiologically compromised. This could be provided by extra bedding and natural or man-made shelters.

During extreme cold weather conditions, *animal handlers* should institute an emergency action plan to provide cattle with shelter, adequate *feed* and water.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality and morbidity rates; physical appearance; behaviour, especially abnormal postures, shivering and huddling; growth rate; body condition; weight loss.

2. Lighting

Housed cattle that do not have sufficient access to natural light should be provided with supplementary lighting which follows natural periodicity sufficient for their health and welfare, to facilitate natural behaviour patterns and to allow adequate and safe inspection of the cattle. The lighting should not cause discomfort to the animals. Housed dairy cows should be provided with subdued night time lighting. Entrance to and exit from restraint facilities and their surrounding area should be well lit.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, especially altered locomotory behaviour; morbidity; physical appearance.

3. Air quality

Good air quality and ventilation are important for the health and welfare of cattle and reduce the risk of respiratory discomfort and diseases. Air quality is affected by air constituents such as gases, dust and micro-organisms, and is influenced strongly by management and building design in housed systems. Air composition is influenced by animal density, the size of the cattle, flooring, bedding, waste management, building design and ventilation system.

Proper ventilation is important for effective heat dissipation in cattle and to prevent the build-up of effluent gases (e.g. ammonia and hydrogen sulphide), including those from manure and dust in the housing unit. The ammonia level in enclosed housing should not exceed 25 ppm. A useful indicator is that if air quality is unpleasant for humans it is also likely to be a problem for cattle.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; behaviour, especially respiratory rate or panting; coughing; changes in weight and body condition; growth rate; physical appearance, especially wet coat.

4. Noise

Cattle are adaptable to different levels and types of noise. However, exposure of cattle to sudden and unexpected noises, including from personnel, should be minimised where possible to prevent stress and fear reactions. Ventilation fans, alarms, feeding machinery or other indoor or outdoor equipment should be constructed, placed, operated and maintained in a manner that minimises noise.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour especially agitation and nervousness; changes in milk yield.

5. Flooring, bedding, resting surfaces and outdoor areas

In all production systems cattle need a well-drained and comfortable place to rest. All cattle in a group should have sufficient space to lie down and rest at the same time.

Particular attention should be given to the provisions for areas used for calving. The environment in such areas (e.g. floors, bedding, temperature, calving pen and hygiene) should be appropriate to ensure the welfare of calving cows and new born calves.

In housed systems calving areas should be thoroughly cleaned and provided with fresh bedding between each calving. Group pens for calving should be managed based on the principle "all in - all out". The group calving pen should be thoroughly cleaned and provided with fresh bedding between each animal group. The time interval between first and last calving of cows kept in the same group calving pen should be minimised.

Outdoor calving pens and fields should be selected to provide the cow with a clean and comfortable environment. Floor management in housed production systems can have a significant impact on cattle welfare. Areas that compromise welfare and are not suitable for resting (e.g. places with excessive faecal accumulation, or wet bedding) should not be included in the determination of the area available for cattle to lie down.

Slopes of the pens should allow water to drain away from *feed* troughs and not pool the pens.

Flooring, bedding, resting surfaces and outdoor yards should be cleaned as conditions warrant, to ensure good hygiene, comfort and minimise risk of diseases and injuries.

In pasture systems, stock should be rotated between fields to ensure good hygiene and minimise risk of diseases and injuries.

Bedding should be provided to all animals housed on concrete. In straw, sand or other bedding systems such as rubber mats, crumbled-rubber-filled mattresses and waterbeds, the bedding should be suitable (e.g. hygienic, non-toxic) and maintained to provide cattle with a clean, dry and comfortable place on which to lie.

The design of a standing, or cubicle, or free stall, should be such that the animals can stand and lie comfortably on a solid surface (e.g. length, width and height should be appropriate for the size of the largest animal). There should be sufficient room for the animal to rest and to rise adopting normal postures, to move its head freely as it stands up, and to groom itself without difficulty. Where housing design provides only individual spaces for cows to rest, there should be at least one space per cow.

Alleys and gates should be designed and operated to allow free movement of cattle. Floors should be designed to minimise slipping and falling, promote foot health, and reduce the risk of claw injuries.

If a housing system includes areas of slatted floor, cattle, including replacement stock, should have access to a solid lying area. The slat and gap widths should be appropriate to the hoof size of the cattle to prevent injuries.

If cattle have to be tethered whether indoors or outdoors, they should, as a minimum, be able to lie down, stand up, maintain normal body posture and groom themselves unimpeded. Cows kept in tie stall housing should be allowed sufficient untethered exercise to prevent welfare problems. When tethered outdoors they should be able to walk. *Animal handlers* should be aware of the higher risks of welfare problems where cattle are tethered.

Where breeding bulls are in housing systems, care should be taken to ensure that they have sight of other cattle with sufficient space for resting and exercise. If used for natural mating, the floor should not be slatted or slippery.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rates, especially lameness and injuries (e.g. hock and knee injuries and skin lesions); behaviour (e.g. altered locomotion and posture, altered lying time, grooming and not using the intended lying areas); changes in weight and body condition; physical appearance (e.g. hair loss, cleanliness score); growth rate.

6. Location, construction and equipment

The impacts of climate and geographical factors on dairy cattle should be evaluated when farms are established. Efforts should be made to mitigate any negative impacts of those factors, including matching dairy breed to location and consideration of alternate sites.

All facilities for dairy cattle should be constructed, maintained and operated to minimise the risk to the welfare of the cattle.

In pasture and combination systems tracks and races between the milking area and fields should be laid out and managed so as to minimise the overall distances walked. Construction and maintenance of tracks and races, including their surface, should minimise any risk to the welfare of the cattle, especially from foot health problems.

Equipment for milking, handling and restraining dairy cattle should be constructed and used in a way that minimises the risk of injury, pain or distress. Manufacturers of such equipment should consider *animal welfare* when designing it and when preparing operating instructions.

Electrified equipment designed to control animal behaviour (e.g. cow trainer) may cause welfare problems if not designed, used and maintained properly.

Electrified fences and gates should be well-designed and maintained to avoid welfare problems, and used only in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Where access to an outdoor area, including pasture, is possible, there may be additional benefits to dairy cattle from the opportunity to graze and exercise, especially a decreased risk of lameness.

In all production systems, *feed* and water provision should allow all cattle to have access to *feed* and water. Feeding systems should be designed to minimise agonistic behaviour. Feeders and water providers should be easy to clean and properly maintained.

Milking parlours, free stalls, standings, cubicles, races, chutes and pens should be properly maintained and be free from sharp edges and protrusions to prevent injury to cattle.

There should be a separated area where individual animals can be examined closely and which has restraining facilities.

When relevant, sick and injured animals should be treated away from healthy animals. When a dedicated space is provided this should accommodate all the needs of the animal, e.g. recumbent animals may require additional bedding or an alternative floors surface.

Hydraulic, pneumatic and manual equipment should be adjusted, as appropriate, to the size of cattle to be handled. Hydraulic and pneumatic operated restraining equipment should have pressure limiting devices to prevent injuries. Regular cleaning and maintenance of working parts is essential to ensure the system functions properly and is safe for the cattle.

Mechanical and electrical devices used in facilities should be safe for cattle.

Dipping baths and spray races used for ectoparasite control should be designed and operated to minimise the risk of crowding and to prevent injury and drowning.

Collecting yards (e.g. entry to the milking parlour) should be designed and operated to minimise stress and prevent injuries and lameness.

The loading areas and ramps, including the slope of the ramp, should be designed to minimise stress and injuries for the animals and ensure the safety of the *animal handlers*, in accordance with Chapters 7.2., 7.3. and 7.4.

Outcome-based measurables: handling response; morbidity rate, especially lameness; mortality rate; behaviour, especially altered locomotory behaviour; injury rate; changes in weight and body condition; physical appearance; growth rate.

7. Emergency plans

The failure of power, water and *feed* supply systems could compromise *animal welfare*. Dairy producers should have contingency plans to cover the failure of these systems. These plans may include the provision of fail-safe alarms to detect malfunctions, back-up generators, contact information for key service providers, ability to store water on farm, access to water cartage services, adequate on-farm storage of *feed*, alternative *feed* supply, and emergency *killing* of animals according to Chapter 7.6.

Preventive measures for emergencies should be input-based rather than outcome based. Contingency plans should include an evacuation plan and be documented and communicated to all responsible parties. Alarms and back-up systems should be checked regularly.

Article 7.11.7.

Recommendations on animal management practices

Good animal management practices are critical to providing an acceptable level of *animal welfare*. Personnel involved in handling and caring for dairy cattle should be competent with relevant experience or training to equip them with the necessary practical skills and knowledge of dairy cattle behaviour, handling, health, *biosecurity*, physiological needs and welfare. There should be a sufficient number of *animal handlers* to ensure the health and welfare of the cattle.

1. Biosecurity and animal health

a) Biosecurity and disease prevention

Biosecurity plans should be designed, implemented and maintained, commensurate with the best possible *herd* health status, available resources and infrastructure, and current disease risk and, for *listed diseases* in accordance with relevant recommendations in the *Terrestrial Code*.

These *biosecurity plans* should address the control of the major sources and pathways for spread of pathogenic agents:

- cattle, including introductions to the *herd*,
- calves coming from different sources,
- other domestic animals, *wildlife*, and pests,
- people including sanitation practices,
- equipment, tools and facilities,
- *vehicles*,
- air,
- water supply, *feed* and bedding,
- manure, waste and dead stock disposal,
- semen and embryos.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; reproductive efficiency; changes in weight and body condition; changes in milk yield.

b) Animal health management

Animal health management should optimise the physical and behavioural health and welfare of the dairy *herd*. It includes the prevention, treatment and control of diseases and conditions affecting the *herd* (in particular mastitis, lameness, reproductive and metabolic diseases).

There should be an effective programme for the prevention and treatment of diseases and conditions, formulated in consultation with a *veterinarian*, where appropriate. This programme should include the recording of production data (e.g. number of lactating cows, births, animal movements in and out of the *herd*, milk yield), morbidities, mortalities, culling rate and medical treatments. It should be kept up to date by the *animal handler*. Regular monitoring of records aids management and quickly reveals problem areas for intervention.

For parasitic burdens (e.g. endoparasites, ectoparasites and protozoa), a programme should be implemented to monitor, control and treat, as appropriate.

Lameness can be a problem in dairy cattle. *Animal handlers* should monitor the state of feet and take measures to prevent lameness and maintain foot health.

Those responsible for the care of cattle should be aware of early specific signs of disease or distress (e.g. coughing, ocular discharge, changes in milk appearance, changes in locomotory behaviour), and non-specific signs such as reduced *feed* and water intake, reduction of milk production, changes in weight and body

condition, changes in behaviour or abnormal physical appearance.

Cattle at higher risk of disease or distress will require more frequent inspection by *animal handlers*. If *animal handlers* suspect the presence of a disease or are not able to correct the causes of disease or distress, they should seek advice from those having training and experience, such as *veterinarians* or other qualified advisers, as appropriate.

Vaccinations and other treatments administered to cattle should be carried out by *veterinarians* or other people skilled in the procedures and on the basis of veterinary or other expert advice and with consideration for the welfare of the dairy cattle.

Animal handlers should be competent in identifying and appropriately managing chronically ill or injured cattle, for instance in recognising and dealing with non-ambulatory cattle, especially those that have recently calved. Veterinary advice should be sought as appropriate.

Non-ambulatory cattle should have access to water at all times and be provided with *feed* at least once daily and milked as necessary. They should be provided shade and protected from predators. They should not be transported or moved unless absolutely necessary for treatment or diagnosis. Such movements should be done carefully using methods that avoid dragging the animal or lifting it in a way that might exacerbate injuries.

Animal handlers should also be competent in assessing fitness to transport, as described in Chapter 7.3.

In case of disease or injury, when treatment has failed or recovery is unlikely (e.g. cattle that are unable to stand up, unaided or refuse to eat or drink), the animal should be humanely killed as soon as possible in accordance with Chapter 7.6.

Animals suffering from photosensitisation should be provided with shade and where possible the cause should be identified.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; reproductive efficiency; depressive behaviour; altered locomotory behaviour; physical appearance; changes in weight and body condition; changes in milk yield.

c) Emergency plans for disease outbreaks

Emergency plans should cover the management of the farm in the face of an emergency disease *outbreak*, consistent with national programmes and recommendations of *Veterinary Services* as appropriate.

2. Nutrition

The nutrient requirements of dairy cattle have been well defined. Energy, protein, mineral and vitamin content of the diet are major factors determining milk production and growth, feed efficiency, reproductive efficiency, and body condition.

Cattle should be provided with access to an appropriate quantity and quality of balanced nutrition that meets their physiological needs.

Where cattle are maintained in outdoor conditions, short term exposure to climatic extremes may prevent access to nutrition that meets their daily physiological needs. In such circumstances the *animal handler* should ensure that the period of reduced nutrition is not prolonged and that extra food and water supply are provided if welfare would otherwise be compromised.

Animal handlers should have adequate knowledge of appropriate body condition scoring systems for their cattle and should not allow body condition to go outside an acceptable range in accordance with breed and physiological status.

Feedstuffs and *feed ingredients* should be of satisfactory quality to meet nutritional needs and stored to minimise contamination and deterioration. Where appropriate, *feed* and *feed ingredients* should be tested for the presence of substances that would adversely impact on animal health. Control and monitoring of animal *feed* should be implemented in accordance with relevant recommendations in Chapter 6.4.

The relative risk of digestive upset in cattle increases as the proportion of grain increases in the diet or if quality of silage is poor. Grain or new diets should be introduced slowly and palatable fibrous *feed* such as silage, grass and hay, should be available *ad libitum* to meet metabolic requirements in a way that promotes digestion and ensures normal rumen function.

Animal handlers should understand the impact of cattle size and age, weather patterns, diet composition and sudden dietary changes in respect to digestive upsets and their negative consequences (displaced abomasum,

sub-acute ruminal acidosis, bloat, liver abscess, laminitis). Where appropriate, dairy producers should consult a cattle nutritionist for advice on ration formulation and feeding programmes.

Particular attention should be paid to nutrition in the last month of pregnancy, with regards to energy balance, roughage and micronutrients, in order to minimise calving and post-calving diseases and body condition loss.

Liquid milk (or milk replacer) is essential for healthy growth and welfare of calves. However, feeding calves all-liquid diets as the sole source of nutrition after 4-6 weeks of age limits the physiological development of the rumen. Calves over two weeks old should have a sufficient daily ration of fibrous *feed* and starter ration (concentrate) to promote rumen development and to reduce abnormal oral behaviours.

Dairy producers should become familiar with potential micronutrient deficiencies or excesses for production systems in their respective geographical areas and use appropriately formulated supplements where necessary.

All cattle, including unweaned calves, need an adequate supply and access to palatable water that meets their physiological requirements and is free from contaminants hazardous to cattle health.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rates; morbidity rates; behaviour, especially agonistic behaviour (at the feeding area); changes in weight and body condition; reproductive efficiency; changes in milk yield; growth rate; vocalisation.

3. Social environment

Management of cattle should take into account their social environment as it relates to *animal welfare*, particularly in housed systems. Problem areas include: agonistic and oestrus activity, mixing of heifers and cows, feeding cattle of different size and age in the same pens, decreased space allowance, insufficient space at the feeder, insufficient water access and mixing of bulls.

Management of cattle in all systems should take into account the social interactions of cattle within groups. The *animal handler* should understand the dominance hierarchies that develop within different groups and focus on high risk animals, such as sick or injured, very young, very old, small or large size for cohort group, for evidence of agonistic behaviour and excessive mounting behaviour. The *animal handler* should understand the risks of increased agonistic interactions between animals, particularly after mixing groups.

When other measures have failed, cattle that are expressing excessive agonistic activity or excessive mounting behaviour should be removed from the group.

Animal handlers should be aware of the *animal welfare* problems that may be caused by mixing of inappropriate groups of cattle and provide adequate measures to minimise them (e.g. introduction of heifers in a new group, mixing of animals at different production stages that have different dietary needs).

Horned and non-horned cattle should not be mixed because of the risk of injury.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, especially lying times, physical injuries and lesions; changes in weight and body condition; physical appearance (e.g. cleanliness); lameness scores; changes in milk yield; morbidity rate; mortality rate; growth rate; vocalisation.

4. Space allowance

Cattle in all production systems should be offered adequate space for comfort and socialisation.

Insufficient and inadequate space allowance may increase the occurrence of injuries and have an adverse effect on growth rate, feed efficiency, and behaviour such as locomotion, resting, feeding and drinking.

Space allowance should be managed taking into account different areas for lying, standing and feeding. Crowding should not adversely affect normal behaviour of cattle and durations of time spent lying.

All cattle should be able to rest simultaneously, and each animal lie down, stand up and move freely. In growing animals, space allowance should also be managed such that weight gain is not adversely affected. If abnormal behaviour is seen, corrective measures should be taken, such as increasing space allowance, redefining the areas available for lying, standing and feeding.

In pastured systems, stocking density should depend on the available *feed* and water supply and pasture quality.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour, especially agonistic or depressive behaviour; morbidity rate; mortality rate; changes in weight and body condition; physical appearance; changes in milk yield; parasite burden; growth rate.

5. Protection from predators

Cattle should be protected from predators.

Outcome-based measurables: mortality rate; morbidity rate (injury rate); behaviour; physical appearance.

6. Genetic selection

Welfare and health considerations, in addition to productivity, should be taken into account when choosing a breed or subspecies for a particular location or production system.

In breeding programmes, attention should be paid to criteria conducive to the improvement of cattle welfare, including health. The conservation and development of genetic lines of dairy cattle, which limit or reduce animal welfare problems, should be encouraged. Examples of such criteria include nutritional maintenance requirement, disease resistance and heat tolerance.

Individual animals within a breed should be selected to propagate offspring that exhibit traits beneficial to animal health and welfare by promoting robustness and longevity. These include resistance to infectious and production related diseases, ease of calving, fertility, body conformation and mobility, and temperament.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; length of productive life; behaviour; physical appearance; reproductive efficiency; lameness; human-animal relationship; growth rate; body condition outside an acceptable range.

7. Artificial insemination, pregnancy diagnosis and embryo transfer

Semen collection should be carried out by a trained operator in a manner that does not cause pain or distress to the bull and any teaser animal used during collection and in accordance with Chapter 4.7.

Artificial insemination and pregnancy diagnosis should be performed by a competent operator in a manner that does not cause pain or distress.

Embryo transfer should be performed under an epidural or other anaesthesia by a trained operator, preferably a *veterinarian* or a *veterinary paraprofessional* and in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 4.8. and Chapter 4.9.

Outcome-based measurables: behaviour; morbidity rate; reproductive efficiency.

8. Dam and sire selection and calving management

Dystocia is a welfare risk to dairy cattle. Heifers should not be bred before they reach the stage of physical maturity sufficient to ensure the health and welfare of both dam and calf at birth. The sire has a highly heritable effect on final calf size and as such can have a significant impact on ease of calving. Sire selection for embryo implantation, insemination or natural mating, should take into account the maturity and size of the female.

Pregnant cows and heifers should be managed during pregnancy so as to achieve an appropriate body condition range for the breed. Excessive fatness increases the risk of dystocia and metabolic disorders during late pregnancy or after parturition.

Cows and heifers should be monitored when they are close to calving. Animals observed to be having difficulty in calving should be assisted by a competent handler as soon as possible after they are detected. When a caesarean section is required, it must be carried out by a *veterinarian*.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate (cow and calf); reproductive efficiency, especially rate of dystocia, retained placenta and metritis; body condition.

9. Newborn calves

Calving aids should not be used to speed the birthing process, only to assist in cases of dystocia, and should not cause undue pain, distress, or further medical problems.

Newborn calves are susceptible to hypothermia. The temperature and ventilation of the birthing area should consider the needs of the newborn calf. Soft, dry bedding and supplemental heat can help prevent cold stress.

Receiving adequate immunity from colostrum generally depends on the volume and quality of colostrum ingested, and how soon after birth the calf receives it.

Animal handlers should ensure that calves receive colostrum of a satisfactory quality, within 24 hours of birth, and in sufficient quantity, to provide passive immunity. Colostrum is most beneficial if received during the first six hours after birth. When there is risk of disease transfer from the dam, colostrum from a healthy cow should be used.

Recently born calves should not be transported until the navel is dry, and after which time any transport required should be carried out in accordance with Chapter 7.3.

Calves should be handled and moved in a manner which minimises distress and avoids pain and injury.

Outcome-based measurables: physical appearance; mortality rate; morbidity rate; growth rate.

10. Cow-calf separation and weaning

Different strategies to separate the calf from the cow are utilised in dairy cattle production systems. These include early separation (usually within 48 hours of birth) or a more gradual separation (leaving the calf with the cow for a longer period so it can continue to be suckled). Separation is stressful for both cow and calf.

For the purposes of this chapter, weaning means the change from a milk-based diet to a fibrous diet and the weaned calf no longer receives milk in its diet. This change should be made gradually and calves should be weaned only when their ruminant digestive system has developed sufficiently to enable them to maintain growth, health and good welfare.

Dairy cattle producers should seek expert advice on the most appropriate time and method of weaning for their type of cattle and production system.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; behaviour after separation (vocalisation, activity of the cow and calf); physical appearance; changes in weight and body condition; growth rate.

11. Rearing of replacement stock

Young calves are at particular risk of thermal stress. Special attention should be paid to management of the thermal environment (e.g. provision of additional bedding, nutrition or protection to maintain warmth and appropriate growth).

Individual calf-housing may facilitate monitoring of health of very young calves and minimise the risk of disease spread, but replacement stock should then be reared in groups. Animals in groups should be of similar age and physical size.

Whether reared individually or in group pens, each calf should have enough space to be able to turn around, rest, stand up and groom comfortably and see other animals.

Replacement stock should be monitored for cross-sucking and appropriate measures taken to prevent this occurring (e.g. provide sucking devices, revise or modify feeding practices, provide other environmental enrichments).

Particular attention should be paid to the nutrition, including trace elements, of growing replacement stock to ensure good health and that they achieve an appropriate growth curve for the breed and farming objectives.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate; mortality rate; behaviour, especially cross-sucking, altered grooming and lying behaviours; injuries; physical appearance; changes in weight and body condition; growth rate.

12. Milking management

Milking, whether by hand or machine, should be carried out in a calm and considerate manner in order to avoid pain and distress. Special attention should be paid to the hygiene of personnel, the udder and milking equipment. All cows should be checked for abnormal milk at every milking.

Milking machines, especially automated milking systems, should be used and maintained in a manner which minimises injury to teats and udders. Manufacturers of such equipment should provide operating instructions that consider *animal welfare*.

A regular milking routine should be established relevant to the stage of lactation and the capacity of the system.

Animal handlers should regularly check the information provided by the milking system and act accordingly to protect the welfare of the cows.

Special care should be paid to animals being milked for the first time. They should be familiarised with the milking facility prior to giving birth.

Long waiting times before and after milking can lead to health and welfare problems (e.g. lameness, reduced time to eat). Management should ensure that waiting times are minimised.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate (e.g. udder health, milk quality); behaviour; changes in milk yield; physical appearance (e.g. lesions).

13. Painful husbandry procedures

Husbandry practices are routinely carried out in cattle for reasons of management, *animal welfare* and human safety. Those practices that have the potential to cause pain should be performed in such a way as to minimise

any pain and stress to the animal. Such procedures should be performed at as early an age as possible or using anaesthesia or analgesia under the recommendation or supervision of a *veterinarian*.

Options for enhancing *animal welfare* in relation to these procedures include: ceasing the procedure and addressing the need for the operation through management strategies; breeding cattle that do not require the procedure; or replacing the current procedure with a non-surgical alternative that has been shown to enhance *animal welfare*.

a) Disbudding and dehorning

Horned dairy cattle are commonly disbudded or dehorned in order to reduce animal injuries and hide damage, improve human safety, reduce damage to facilities and facilitate transport and handling. The selection of polled cattle is preferable to dehorning.

Performing disbudding at an early age is preferred, rather than dehorning older cattle.

Thermal cautery of the horn bud by a trained operator with proper equipment is the recommended method in order to minimise post-operative pain. This should be done at an appropriate age before the horn bud has attached to the skull.

Guidance from a *veterinarian* or *veterinary paraprofessional* as to the optimum method and timing for the type of cattle and production system should be sought. The use of anaesthesia and analgesia are strongly recommended when performing disbudding, and should always be used when dehorning. Appropriate restraint systems and procedures are required when disbudding or dehorning.

Other methods of disbudding include: removal of the horn buds with a knife and the application of chemical paste to cauterise the horn buds. Where chemical paste is used, special attention should be paid to avoid chemical burns to other parts of the calf or to other calves. This method is not recommended for calves older than two weeks.

Operators should be trained and competent in the procedure used, and be able to recognise the signs of pain and complications that may include excessive bleeding or sinus infection.

Methods of dehorning when horn development has commenced involve the removal of the horn by cutting or sawing through the base of the horn close to the skull.

b) Tail docking

Tail docking does not improve the health and welfare of dairy cattle and therefore it is not recommended. As an alternative, trimming of tail hair should be considered where maintenance of hygiene is a problem.

c) Identification

Ear-tagging, ear-notching, tattooing, branding and radio frequency identification devices (RFID) are methods of permanently identifying dairy cattle. The least invasive approach should be adopted whichever method is chosen (e.g. the least number of ear tags per ear and the smallest notch practical). It should be accomplished quickly, expertly and with proper equipment.

Freeze branding and branding with a hot iron should be avoided where alternative identification methods exist (e.g. electronic identification or ear-tags). When branding is used, the operator should be competent in procedures used and be able to recognise signs of complications.

Identification systems should be established also in accordance with Chapter 4.2.

Outcome-based measurables: morbidity rate (post-procedural complications); abnormal behaviour; vocalisation; physical appearance.

14. Inspection and handling

Dairy cattle should be inspected at intervals appropriate to the production system and the risks to the health and welfare of the cattle. Lactating cows should be inspected at least once a day. Some animals should be inspected more frequently, for example, neonatal calves, cows in late gestation, newly weaned calves, cattle experiencing environmental stress and those that have undergone painful husbandry procedures or veterinary treatment.

Dairy cattle identified as sick or injured should be given appropriate treatment at the first available opportunity by competent *animal handlers*. If *animal handlers* are unable to provide appropriate treatment, the services of a *veterinarian* should be sought.

Recommendations on the handling of cattle are also found in Chapter 7.5. In particular handling aids that may cause pain and distress (e.g. electric goads) should be used only in extreme circumstances and provided that the animal can move freely. Dairy cattle should not be prodded in sensitive areas including the udder, face, eyes, nose or ano-genital region. Electric prods should not be used on calves (see also point 3 of Article 7.3.8.).

Where dogs are used as an aid for cattle herding they should be properly trained. *Animal handlers* should be aware that presence of dogs can stress the cattle and cause fear and should keep them under control at all times. The

use of dogs is not appropriate in housed systems, collection yards or other small enclosures where the cattle cannot move freely away.

Cattle are adaptable to different visual environments. However, exposure of cattle to sudden movement or changes in visual contrasts should be minimised where possible to prevent stress and fear reactions.

Electroimmobilisation should not be used.

Outcome-based measurables: handling responses; morbidity rate; mortality rate; behaviour, especially altered locomotory behaviour and vocalisation.

15. Personnel training

All people responsible for dairy cattle should be competent in accordance with their responsibilities and should understand cattle husbandry, animal handling, milking routines, reproductive management techniques, behaviour, *biosecurity*, signs of disease, and indicators of poor *animal welfare* such as stress, pain and discomfort, and their alleviation.

Competence may be gained through formal training or practical experience.

Outcome-based measurables: handling responses; morbidity rate; mortality rate; behaviour; reproductive efficiency; changes in weight and body condition; changes in milk yield.

16. Disaster management

Plans should be in place to minimise and mitigate the effect of disasters (e.g. earthquake, fire, drought, flooding, blizzard, hurricane). Such plans may include evacuation procedures, identifying high ground, maintaining emergency *feed* and water stores, destocking and humane *killing* when necessary.

In times of drought, animal management decisions should be made as early as possible and these should include a consideration of reducing cattle numbers.

Humane *killing* procedures for sick or injured cattle should be part of the disaster management plan.

Reference to emergency plans can also be found in point 7 of Article 7.11.6. and point 1(c) of Article 7.11.7.

17. Humane killing

For sick and injured cattle a prompt diagnosis should be made to determine whether the animal should be treated or humanely killed.

The decision to kill an animal humanely and the procedure itself should be undertaken by a competent person.

Reasons for humane *killing* may include:

- severe emaciation, weak cattle that are non-ambulatory or at risk of becoming non ambulatory;
- non-ambulatory cattle that will not stand up, refuse to eat or drink, have not responded to therapy;
- rapid deterioration of a medical condition for which therapies have been unsuccessful;
- severe, debilitating pain;
- compound (open) fracture;
- spinal injury;
- central nervous system disease;
- multiple joint *infections* with chronic weight loss;
- calves that are premature and unlikely to survive, have a debilitating congenital defect, or otherwise unwanted; and
- as part of disaster management response.

For a description of acceptable methods for humane *killing* of dairy cattle see Chapter 7.6.

NB: FIRST ADOPTED IN 2015; MOST RECENT UPDATE ADOPTED IN 2017.

