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New five-year GB Calf Strategy launched

The GB Calf Strategy 2025-2030 has launched today to challenge the dairy-beef sector to ensure every calf is reared with care, purpose and value.

This ambitious five-year strategy, which has been put together collaboratively by AHDB, Innovation for Agriculture, NFU and Ruminant Health and Welfare (RH&W), follows the progress made from the 2020-2023 GB Dairy Calf Strategy with industry input from 45 farmers, vets, processors, retailers, and industry bodies.

Gwyn Jones, RH&W chairman, said: “There has been significant change since we initially developed a calf strategy back in 2020, but we all continue to have a role to play so this new five-year strategy is launching at a key time for the industry.

“Since 2014, dairy-beef calf registrations have risen by 74%, and in 2024, dairy-beef made up 37% of prime age cattle slaughtered which is a clear sign of the sector’s commitment to rear every calf with purpose as part of an integrated supply chain.”

Sarah Tomlinson, lead veterinary science expert at AHDB said: “This new five-year strategy marks the next chapter for the industry, builds on the success of the outcomes already delivered and brings us all together for a shared vision.

“To reach its potential, we all believe that every calf born in Great Britain should have the right genetics, the right start, and the right route, as this will be critical in enabling thriving, sustainable and high-welfare beef and dairy industries. However, delivering on this ambitious strategy will not be without its challenges.”

The strategy outlines three focus areas – Right Calf, Right Start and Right Route – with clear measurable goals and actions listed for each.

AHDB lead animal genetics expert, Harriet Bunning, says the Right Calf focus area is designed to drive better breeding strategies in the industry.

She explains: “When a calf is bred with a clear purpose, it’s far more likely to enjoy good health, welfare and environmental outcomes.

“That starts with breeding decisions that consider the end purpose of the animal from day one. To enable this, we need to provide genetic information which is backed by clear advice and solid data so farmers can make informed choices.”

Meanwhile, Holly Shearman, head of livestock at Innovation for Agriculture, says the Right Start focus of the strategy is all about encouraging evidence-based best practice rearing management in the sector.

She adds: “We have to embed best practice right across the sector, promoting consistent standards, professional stockmanship, and better health and welfare outcomes.

“We know that early-life care shapes a calf’s future, from its welfare and productivity to its resistance to disease, but that care can vary hugely so our aim is to create a consistent approach that works in the real world but is rooted in science-led best practice. The goal is to

see standard operating procedures in place on all farms, peer networks to share learning, and a clear professional pathway for calf rearers."

Finally, the Right Route focus is designed to ensure every calf has access to the right route to market, whether that is through an integrated dairy-beef scheme, direct sale, or an auction market.

NFU livestock adviser, Phoebe Traquair, explains: "Having a functioning and fair route to market that supports calf, and subsequent cattle, supply chains is essential for animal welfare, sustainability and profitability.

"With increasing pressure on farmers, we want to focus on removing market barriers for calves where possible. We need to ensure bio-secure routes to market are accessible to herds affected by bTB. Data will also play an important role to help improve productivity and already great traceability across the supply chain.

"Finally, we need to ensure domestic and international trade is facilitated at every opportunity to protect and grow our high-welfare British dairy and beef supply chains."

The strategy is available to access and download from the Ruminant Health and Welfare (RH&W) website [here](#).

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About Ruminant Health & Welfare

Ruminant Health & Welfare was established to co-ordinate and focus the ruminant sector's drive in tackling endemic cattle, sheep and goat diseases across the UK, working with partners in the four nations.

We work with industry and governments to influence collective action and secure the policy framework and funding required to prevent, manage or control disease and welfare challenges across the ruminant sectors.

Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland already have protocols in place for many diseases, so Ruminant Health & Welfare's role in these countries will be to assist existing bodies to deliver these priorities and share best practice.

Members comprise of key stakeholders as well as specialist expertise in ruminant disease, genetics and epidemiology.

For more information visit www.ruminanthw.org.uk and [sign up to our newsletter](#) or follow us on Twitter/X [@ruminanthw](#).

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