



Best practice farms optimise the health and welfare of their cows through veterinary consultation, planning and documenting their prophylactic and responsive health and medical management protocols.



Why is this important?

This is important because healthy animals are more likely to perform well in both their reproductive performance and milk yield. Ensuring that prevention of infectious or parasitic disease is a priority and that farm personnel are trained in the appropriate remedial strategies will reduce both the risk and severity of disease for the herd.



Good practice



Best practice

See the  **Cow Nutrition factsheet** for more information



Good practice

- ✓ Protocols and timing for use of cleaning and disinfection chemicals and equipment should be documented and routinely referred and adhered to.
- ✓ Biosecurity procedures to control rodents and insects should be implemented and documented (including, for example bills, a map of the installed control devices and how frequently these are checked). The same process goes for the timing and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting chemicals and equipment (e.g. chlorine bleach, quaternary ammoniums, iodophors). Pesticides and authorised disinfecting chemicals should be used according to the prescribed instructions.
- ✓ Where ill cows are grazing, they must be kept separate, to reduce the risk of infecting other animals. Contaminated areas should be cleaned and rested according to specific risk before reuse.
- ✓ Quarantine should be enforced for all purchased animals, according to the instructions (duration and care) given by your veterinary advisor. It is advised to purchase animals only from farms of equal or better health status.
- ✓ Isolated animals should be easily segregated from the herd, whether on an individual or group basis, to ensure appropriate biosecurity measures (clean to dirty traffic, minimal exposure of staff or other animals, etc).
- ✓ Pasture should be secured with fences or other systems to avoid contact with other species of animals, or neighbouring herds of the same species.
- ✓ There should be defined and comprehensive procedures documented in a biosecurity manual to regulate the entry of visitors to the farm. Hand, boot washing areas and disinfection points (footbaths) should be provided at the entry to the farm and between areas where different groups of animals are accommodated. A disinfection drive-through tray should be present to minimise the risk of infectious agents spread by vehicles.



Best practice

See the  **Cow Environment factsheet** for more information



Good practice

- ✓ The herd should be inspected regularly. This will require farmers to allocate time every day for inspections, as well as that required to take any remedial action necessary.
- ✓ Hygiene and cleanliness must be kept to a high standard to help prevent infection and/or disease transmission.
- ✓ Advice should be taken from your veterinary advisor to ensure appropriate disease prevention and control measures are in operation. This might include use of vaccinations or parasiticial treatments.
- ✓ The biosecurity plan of the farm should be made with veterinary support, include an action plan for testing and management of relevant diseases and be reviewed at least annually.
- ✓ When bacterial pathogens are suspected on a farm, contact should be made with the veterinarian for bacteriology testing for culture, identification and antibiotic sensitivity enabling targeted treatment and prevention programs.
- ✓ Cows should be observed for signs of fever including elevated body temperature, increased heart and respiratory rate, dehydration or reduced appetite and rumination.
- ✓ Cows receiving treatment for infectious disease (irrespective of body system involved) should be monitored closely. Treatment of other cows in close contact may not be necessary unless they start to show clinical signs.
- ✓ Treatments applied to ill cows and mortality data must be recorded in the farm records.



Best practice

- ★ **Best practice** farms have a comprehensive health, reproductive and welfare plan developed in collaboration with veterinary and allied professional advisors which covers both preventative and responsive health interventions. Performance, morbidity and mortality data is required, which may be enhanced through automatic herd monitoring and recording systems. Data assessed includes reproductive performance, dystocia, metabolic disease cases, mastitis cases, SCC, infectious diseases, use of antibiotics, use of pain relief medications, cows requiring veterinary interventions, gait scoring, lameness cases, cow cleanliness scoring and behavioural parameters (both positive and negative) etc. This plan should be reviewed and updated each year based on farm data from the previous 12 month period.
- ★ **Best practice** farms have a contingency plan in case of outbreak of contagious diseases close to the farm. This may be tailored to the individual farm, in consultation with veterinary advisors, or drafted for a group of farms in close proximity with similar measures in place. How to handle outbreaks of notifiable diseases is regulated by law and the Competent Authority will be in charge.
- ★ **Best practice** farms follow veterinary advice to vaccinate breeding cows for the most common pathogens that affect fertility, mortality and production losses in compliance with the national legal requirements.



Good practice



Best practice

See the  **Cow Behaviour and Human-Animal interactions factsheet** for more information





Summary

Time invested in minimising risks of preventable infectious and parasitic illnesses and careful planning for management of unavoidable illness, will help protect health and maximise the productivity and overall performance of the cow herd.



Farm

Healthy cows are more likely to perform well for the farm, improving their cost effectiveness and reducing the cost of losses from infectious and parasitic diseases.



Cows

Ensuring their environment is safe and the risks from infectious and parasitic disease are minimised, will protect cow health and welfare.



Handler

Training, planning and support from farming and veterinary advisors will improve the confidence of those caring for the cows and support their own health, job satisfaction and resilience at work.

Take pride in all of your farm's good and best practices towards animal welfare!

Additional resources



Care4Dairy.eu