

**RSPCA Beef Cattle Standards Technical Advisory Group meeting
on Tuesday 31st August 2021.**

Meeting Summary Notes.

What has been happening to the standards since the last meeting?

The group recapped the action points of the last meeting, many of which related to the standards update. The standards were published in February 2020 and have been implemented on-farm since then. The next update is planned for the first quarter of 2022 and the group considered areas which might need to be updated in the next iteration. These include the timing of grouping of calves, access to pasture for all animals, frequency and method of milk feeding among others.

Collection centres and livestock markets

Some progress had been made in the information gathering of this area but this was disrupted by the COVID pandemic. This is an area of work which is continuing and the group discussed the most efficient use of resources. Collection centres were determined to be the best area to focus on for the time being.

Access to pasture

The group discussed access to pasture for dairy-beef enterprises and the feasibility of achieving the required daily live weight gain (DLWG) to finish the animals within the required time to the required weight of the contract if access to pasture were given. The group discussed the breeds better suited to access to pasture, the time of year calves are born and the feasibility of some born at certain times to access pasture.

Feeding of calves

The group discussed the many aspects of feeding calves, including the volume of milk given, the frequency of feeds and the method of feeding (teat vs bucket feeding). There was discussion regarding gradual weaning and different approaches to achieve it as well as dry matter needing to be consumed prior to weaning.

Grouping calves

The timing of grouping calves is a very current topic and the group reviewed the RSPCA welfare standards for beef and dairy cattle in this area and how it might need updating. The benefits to calves of grouping at birth or very early vs later as well as potential drawbacks were discussed with the calves' welfare and the current science in mind.

Any other business

The challenge of achieving whole life assurance under the current RSPCA Welfare standards was raised and the possibility of dwell times for beef finishing businesses was discussed.