



“What is happening in the real world? Are dairy bulls being shot?”

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Westpoint Veterinary Group Ltd



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Who is Rob Drysdale MRCVS?

- 12 practices across UK with 34 farm vets
- Total practice with >60,000 dairy cows
- Nearly 200,000 head beef and youngstock
- Particular interest in calf health and welfare
- Vet to Blade Farming SW Ltd:
 - Complete and integrated beef supply chain
 - Produced more than 14,000 calves last year
 - UK's largest single beef producer



What about dairy bull calves?



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Background

- Following last meeting I decided to take opportunity at Dairy Event to survey farmers about their attitudes to bull calves
- Questionnaire designed to include:
 - Unit information
 - Specific questions on how these farmers deal with dairy bull calves
 - Use of sexed semen





What did we find out? (1)

- 239 farmers were interviewed
- Representing 52,636 milking cows
- Average herd size 220 cows
- Split into:
 - 192 units mainly/all Holstein/Friesian
 - 13 units mainly/all Jersey/Channel Island
 - 25 units Crossbred
 - 9 units mainly/all Ayrshire



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What did we find out? (2)

- Do you shoot dairy bull calves?
 - Yes = 16.7%
 - No = 73.6%
- 2,411 animals shot last 12 months
- Assume 90% calving/year = 5.1% of the survey population calves born/year
- 60.3 average shot by farm shooting





What did we find out? (3)

- Do you rear dairy bull calves?
 - Yes = 38.5%
 - No = 51.4%
- Do you sell dairy bull calves?
 - Yes = 41.8%
 - No = 46.9%
- These findings suggest that most farmers now consider bull calves viable to sell





Attitudes to sexed semen

- Do you use sexed semen on your farm?
 - Yes = 46.4% (111)
 - No = 50.6% (121)
- Do you use sexed semen in cows?
 - Yes = 9.1% (10)
 - No = 90.9% (101)
- Are you happy with sexed semen?
 - Yes = 39.7% (95/239)





Credit: thank you to the farmers that took the time to undertake this survey at the Dairy Event, September 2009.

Thank you.





Over to you – any questions?

