

Latest News from RSPCA Assured

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Your ruminants update

From RSPCA Assured



A message to you

By Joe Bailey, Head of Farming

We appreciate it has been an uncertain year for everyone. Our sympathy is with those who have suffered, but we are fully aware of how resilient you continue to be. We are proud of your efforts to mitigate and manage the challenges faced.

Amongst the gloom, there have been shining lights. We continue to experience growth together. Excitingly, all [Guernsey dairy farms](#) are now certified. And [Rodda's dairy farms](#) have come on the scheme, which means we can enjoy some RSPCA Assured clotted cream with our mince pies. I was also pleased to see the media recognise the challenges we faced in the industry this year.

Next year might hold some of the same difficulties. But there are lots of things to remain positive about. Please get in touch with us if there is anything you need - be mindful our opening times differ over the festive period. As always, we will do everything we can to support you.

I hope you can still have a good festive season and whether working or resting, you find some peace, joy, love, and laughter. May the New Year bring some hope and positivity.

Take care,
Joe

Update from the RSPCA Farm Animals Department

By Emily Coughlan, Senior Scientific Officer for Ruminants (RSPCA)

It's been a busy time for the RSPCA Farm Animals Department and, with regards to ruminants, we have been working with the new Ruminant Health and Welfare group - looking at which health and welfare conditions would benefit from being focussed on in the next ten years to 2031.

We've had input into the new Animal Health and Welfare Pathway and are excited to see how this will look in practice in 2022. We also held a Standard Technical Advisory Group meeting in early December to discuss the new Dairy Welfare Standards. A list of members and summary notes from the meetings are [available on our website](#).

Top tips for meeting the updated dairy cattle standards

By Emily Coughlan, Senior Scientific Officer for Ruminants (RSPCA)

The RSPCA Farm Animals Department is responsible for writing and developing the species specific welfare standards that are used by RSPCA Assured. We published a new edition of the [RSPCA Welfare Standards for Dairy Cattle](#) in June.

Key changes to note:

- The development of plans to help producers prevent unmarketable calves from being born on-farm.
- The moving of calves from individual hutches to groups within three weeks of birth.
- Developing a farm specific bTB management plan, regardless of herd bTB status.
- Increasing the cow brush ratio to one per 60 cows, and at least one per group of cows.

Top tips for meeting the standards:

- Familiarise yourself and your staff with the requirements - particularly any revised or new standards since the last publication of the standards (if you are an existing RSPCA Assured member).
- Ensure your vet has access to the standards and is aware of the requirements that are relevant to them, e.g. the information needed in the Veterinary Health and Welfare Plan. Your vet should be familiar with these requirements before they visit.
- Ensure new and temporary staff are aware of the key standards and those relevant to their areas of work, prior to starting work with the animals.
- If unsure of what a standard requires then seek clarification - we are happy to provide further guidance if required.

Regarding the new standards:

- Regarding S(C) 2.6 and 2.7 (pg 83): Ensure breeding plans and calf management protocols are such that you are producing a strong, healthy calf, which will be the most valuable to your business. We would expect that those following the standards regarding calf rearing will be producing strong, healthy animals that have received a good level of passive transfer of colostrum antibodies.
- Regarding H 2.1(pg 42): Herds based in England can take advantage of the free service offered by TBAS to get a bTB management plan in place. Those in Wales who are eligible could contact Cymorth TB. Other sources of information are detailed within the standards and the farm's own veterinary surgeon should also be involved.
- Regarding E(C) 1.11 (pg 74) and E(C)3.9 (pg 75): Ensure you have sufficient accommodation for calves to be grouped (in at least pairs) from three weeks of age. If using hutches, ensure these provide a bedded area meeting the requirement in E 4.2 for the number of animals using the hutch, e.g. two calves weighing less than 100kg would require a hutch providing at least 3m² of bedded lying space. Remember, as the calves grow, the space they need will increase and this must be factored into management plans.

The RSPCA Farm Animals Department is always happy to clarify any of the standards or discuss the rationale behind the standards should you wish to do so. Please contact us at farm-animals@rspca.org.uk.



10 reasons why farmers should consider planting trees

By Chris Waterfield, Carbon and Water Advisor (Forestry Commission)

Tree planting can present opportunities to diversify, generate additional income, increase farm productivity, improve welfare, and enhance your land – whilst also supporting wider environmental goals. Here's how.

TOP 10 REASONS:

1. Prevent soil erosion - Planting tree shelterbelts around your farm lower windspeed to

help reduce that erosion.

2. Protect livestock and crops - Trees help protect your livestock and crops against more frequent extreme weather conditions that we've seen over the recent past

3. Get paid for creating and managing woodlands - You can get financial support through the [Forestry Commission](#) and via our partners, helping to make woodland creation a reality for you.

4. Generate reliable income streams - With timber in high demand now and into the future, you could gain revenue streams. And local woodfuel production can provide efficient on-farm energy savings to heat your buildings.

5. Diversify your income - Woodland creation can strengthen business resilience and generate alternative income streams. They provide an opportunity for recreation and leisure activities or alternative crops – and avoid having all your eggs in one basket.

6. Cut farm pollution - Planting woodland shelterbelts around your farm can reduce spray drift up to 90%, as well as helping to capture pesticide run-off and ammonia released from livestock units.

7. Offset your carbon emissions - Woodlands play an important role in addressing climate change. Trees act as a natural 'carbon sink' by removing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

8. Increase farm productivity - Combining trees with crops and livestock can result in healthier soil, which could lead to more sustainable yields and enhanced biodiversity. Agroforestry can also help increase farm productivity and better utilise your land.

9. Create natural flood management and improve water quality - Woodland in the right place helps slow run-off from your land as well as helping to reduce water pollution in our streams, rivers, and lakes.

10. Boost biodiversity - All woodlands are home to a wealth of wildlife. Making smaller woodlands bigger or connecting existing woodlands with one another can help expand habitats and encourage vital wildlife corridors.

Read the full blog on why you should consider planting trees, [here](#).



You've heard of elf on a shelf, now there's...

By Jodie Adam, Digital Media Manager

Every year, troublesome elves move from shelf to shelf, creating household mischief and delighting children every morning when they wake up to discover the naughty nocturnal antics.

This year, our own cheeky RSPCA Assured elf, Alf the Elf, has decided to try something different. Fed up with causing havoc at home, he's heading into the great outdoors.

That's right, you've heard of elf on a shelf, well this year, it's elf on a farm.

This Christmas, the mischievous Alf the Elf, together with his partner in crime, Holly, will be out and about on RSPCA Assured farms getting up to all sorts of shenanigans. He might be tagging along with one of our farm assessors, riding a tractor, or even perching with the hens - always following biosecurity measures, of course.

So far we've seen Alf and Holly checking out the RSPCA Assured welfare standards, hiding in a box of RSPCA Assured eggs, munching on some biscuits while sipping RSPCA Assured milk and then relaxing whilst watching our new [Welly Vision series on YouTube](#).

Every day in December, we'll be posting a new photo of Alf the Elf and linking through to a page on our website to raise awareness of what RSPCA Assured and our members do. So when Alf's watching TV we'll be linking to our [Welly Vision page](#), for example.

Be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to keep up with what Alf and Holly are getting up to.

The Farming Community Network: time for reflection

By Jude McCann, Chief Executive Officer (The Farming Community Network)

The last 18 months have been challenging and a time for reflection for many of us. Extended periods apart have reminded us of all the things that truly matter in our lives – such as family, friends and the networks we build around us.

There is still great uncertainty around the future of British agriculture, but we must remember that we are all in this together. Our farmers operate to some of the highest standards in the world and are among the great innovators. Farmers will continue to play a significant role in addressing global challenges, such as food security and climate change.

We should all be proud of the work that we do, keeping the nation fed, maintaining our beautiful countryside and protecting the welfare of the livestock who rely on us. Let us all face the coming years and the changes ahead with optimism, tenacity and resilience.

If you are struggling and need help, we can offer support and advice:

[The Farming Community Network \(ECN\)](#)

Phone: 03000 111 999

CofE community engagement: festive video

By Rebecca Lenik, Senior Public Relations Manager

We launched a pilot community engagement project with the [Church of England's Chichester Diocese](#). The project aims to create awareness and trust of the work of RSPCA Assured, the importance of farm animal welfare and connect members of the Diocese with where and how their food is produced.



Why the Church of England?

We wanted to engage with a like-minded group near to RSPCA Assured's Horsham HQ,

because we felt our story would resonate more strongly with the local community and help us build a closer connection.

After exploring a number of different potential stakeholders - including religious and other community groups such as the Lions, Rotary Club and WI - we felt that the Church of England was the right fit for our first community engagement, as Churches are at the heart of many farming communities.

We officially launched our pilot engagement project on Farm Animal Welfare Sunday (3 October) with a video of RSPCA Assured's Joe Bailey talking to Revd Mark Betson, on an RSPCA Assured dairy farm in Sussex, about why Church communities should care about farm animal welfare. This was supported by a double-page feature in Faith in Sussex magazine. Churches play a key role in many farmers' lives, especially in the run-up to Christmas. So, we've also revamped our video to give it a more festive feel.

We'll keep you updated on how the project progresses and, as resource permits, we hope to engage with other faith and non-faith community groups in the near future.

Helpful wellbeing links

If you need help or have queries related to RSPCA Assured, please do [contact us](#). We have also shared some helpful links on wellbeing during these uncertain times:

[That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief](#)

[Caring for employee mental health: a coronavirus guide](#)

[The Adaptive Challenge of COVID-19](#)

Best wishes,

RSPCA Assured

Keep in touch with our news, sign up to our [newsletter](#).

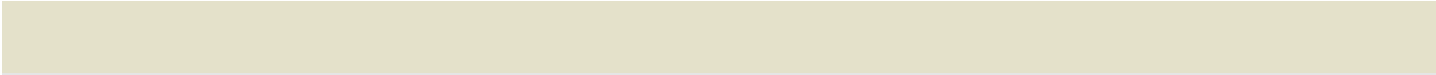
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