



## SANDSTONE VET GROUP

29 September 2022

To whom it may concern,

You raise several points in your previous letter which I have tried to address below.

It is worthwhile noting that we are dealing with live animals and despite our best efforts to prevent them, on occasion accidents happen. Unfortunately, such cases are often associated with pain and suffering and so we have a legal and moral duty of care to ensure that suffering of those animals is minimised. Leaving an animal overnight with a trapped leg until it breaks or an animal hanging itself to death or a cow having prolonged difficulty during calving to the point where it suffers from bilateral hindlimb paralysis or paresis is unacceptable – I don't believe that many would disagree with this. The point here is that the only acceptable level for these types of events is zero and whilst we may never reach this target, it is nonetheless the target that we aim for. There are no well-defined industry levels that I am aware of to suggest otherwise.

I agree with your comment that there is an inevitable level of problems with calving. We reduce this level on units such as Torriad Farm through the adoption technology to select for calving ease. This includes the use of semen from easy calving bulls, sexed semen, selection of heifers with wide pelvises and the provision of tailor-made diets. Whilst all of these reduce the risk of problems during calving, on occasion there are issues. These are often physical resulting in dystocia and includes foetal malpresentation, malformation or foetal oversize. Cows in these situations vocalise and thus it is very clear when they are in trouble. Just like the accidents as described above, there is a welfare issue when these problems are not picked up throughout the night and only becomes apparent in the morning when often it's too late.

Andrew and Nia Jones with Mike Thomas (Herd Manager) are all excellent stockpeople. They are well skilled and experienced in looking after dairy animals to high standards of production and welfare. Whilst they can sort out most issues daily, they are also very aware of their limitations and don't hesitate to call for veterinary assistance when appropriate. However, a vet can only be called to site when issues are identified which requires at stockperson being present to respond to abnormal vocalisation or behaviours that the animal may be expressing. Living on site will ensure that the animals are checked more regularly and as many of the issues described will be picked up quickly. This has been demonstrated by the point that most issues described above occur when the unit is unmanned.

So what reduction can we expect? As mentioned above, the target should be set at zero and we should do as much as is reasonably possible to achieve that target. We have two pieces of information that could be useful to support the view that by manning the site overnight, the level of catastrophic issues could be reduced. Firstly, most of the issues described occur at night and thus by having someone permanently at hand, we would expect levels to drop the

daytime level. Secondly, having looked through the incidents outlined in Appendix 1, I view that at least 6 of these animals could have been saved should someone been on site.

In summary, it is my professional opinion that most of the incidents which have resulted in compromised welfare and loss could have been avoided by simply having someone on site overnight to identify and respond to the issues quickly rather than waiting until the morning when it is often too late to avoid catastrophic injuries and compromises to welfare.

Should you require further information or would like to discuss this further please contact me on 07432 875531.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Hickinson', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Mark Hickinson PhD, BVSc, BSc, MRCVS

| <b>Appendix 1: List of night time incidents over the past 12 months at Torriad Farm.</b> |                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Date</b>                                                                              | <b>Incident</b>                                                                                                               |
| May 2021                                                                                 | Unregistered calf suffocated in amnionic sac, found dead in the morning.                                                      |
| June 2021                                                                                | Adult cow 402344 died during calving, found dead in the morning.                                                              |
| June 2021                                                                                | Adult cow 103083 died though blood loss at calving, found dead in the morning.                                                |
| June 2021                                                                                | Adult cow 103979 strangled, found dead in the morning.                                                                        |
| July 2021                                                                                | Adult cow 602563 found with broken leg in the morning and euthanased.                                                         |
| Nov 2021                                                                                 | Unregistered calf suffocated in amnionic sac, found dead in the morning.                                                      |
| Nov 2021                                                                                 | Second unregistered calf suffocated in amnionic sac, found dead in the morning.                                               |
| Nov 2021                                                                                 | Adult cow DE86277 accident overnight, found unable to stand in the morning and euthanased.                                    |
| Feb 2022                                                                                 | Calf 504396, trapped leg, broken and euthanased when found in the morning.                                                    |
| Feb 2022                                                                                 | Adult cow 27 found with broken leg in the morning and euthanased.                                                             |
| March 22                                                                                 | Adult cow DE80259 found with injured leg in the morning and euthanased.                                                       |
| May 22                                                                                   | 2x unregistered calves born overnight and stood on by cows resulting in broken legs and euthanasia when found in the morning. |
| May 22                                                                                   | Unregistered twins suffocated in amnionic sac, found dead in the morning.                                                     |