

Animal welfare organisations oppose dairy factory farm

Leading animal welfare organisations Compassion in World Farming and The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) unite to oppose the plans for Britain's biggest factory dairy farm.

Nocton Dairies have submitted a planning application for the UK's largest dairy farm in south Lincolnshire. The intensive system will "farm" 8,100 cows for most of the year, while the average UK dairy herd currently has around 70 cows.

Compassion in World Farming and WSPA believe that this proposed development represents the industrialisation of a traditionally pasture-based system. The cows will be kept indoors for most of the year. They have been bred to produce more milk than can be sustained on grass without suffering from a range of health and welfare conditions such as lameness, poor body condition and infertility, with a likelihood of early slaughter.

Suzi Morris, Director for WSPA UK said: "Cows at this level of productivity are at high risk of a short lifespan. Even if these problems can be avoided by professional management, the cows are likely to be kept indoors for most of the year and spend most of their time processing food to maintain high levels of milk production. We need to find a better way to support Britain's dairy farmers to deliver larger quantities of milk to the consumer without sacrificing welfare standards. WSPA is concerned that if Nocton's planning proposal is approved, it opens the floodgates for intensive dairy farming."

Access to grazing pastures provides the natural food of ruminant animals such as cows but in the proposed American-style, high yield system, grazing will play a very limited part in their diet, with the cows allowed out only towards the end of each lactation. Those which approach the end of their lactation or dry period in the winter may not be allowed out at all.

Phil Brooke, Welfare Development Manager for Compassion in World Farming, said: "This application would represent a serious leap in the industrialisation of dairy farming in this country. The breeds of cows chosen should be able to sustain production on pasture without health and welfare problems. We urge the authorities to carefully consider the implications for UK dairy farming and to refuse permission for this development".

Compassion in World Farming and WSPA believe that dairy production must have a balance which provides a good free-range life for cows and a decent living for small dairy farmers. Consumers should look for organic milk, cheese and butter and ask their supermarkets not to stock dairy products from cows prevented from grazing.

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Notes to Editors

For further information or to arrange interviews with **Compassion in World Farming** contact **Caroline Burkie** on **01483 521953** or **07771 926005** or email caroline.burkie@ciwf.org

For more information, photos and interviewees please with **The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)** please contact me on **0207 840 6241** or email lisabronstein@wspa.org.uk

The charity, **Compassion in World Farming**, campaigns peacefully to end cruel factory farming practices. We believe that farm animals should not and need not suffer.

Given a natural healthy life, cows can live for twenty years or more.

High yielding dairy cows are likely to last for only around a quarter to a third of that time.

Many are culled after three or fewer lactations because they are chronically lame or infertile.

Milk is heavy and a dairy cow may be carrying several extra kilos of milk in her udders. This can force her hind legs into an unnatural position, making walking difficult, and can result in moderate or severe lameness. It can also make standing and lying down difficult and uncomfortable.

Cows kept indoors have less opportunity to act naturally and exercise.

Dairy cows give birth to one calf per year to continue producing milk. They are usually artificially inseminated within three months of giving birth.

Extreme dairy breeds such as the Holstein-Friesian, the breed most common in the UK, Europe and the USA have been bred to produce very high yields of milk.

In the UK most dairy cows still have access to grazing on pasture for part of the day in summer, but more cows are being kept indoors for longer, or even all year round. This is known as 'zero grazing', and is increasingly used in North America and parts of the UK for large and high yielding herds.

About WSPA:

The World Society for the Protection of Animals is the world's largest alliance of humane societies and animal protection organisations, representing over 1000 member societies in more than 150 countries. Through direct field work, campaigning, legislative work and education, WSPA strives to create a world where animal welfare matters and animal cruelty ends.

WSPA's work on farm animal welfare:

Welfare standards case study: free range vs. factory

Free range dairy cow and calf

A factory farmed dairy cow is usually separated from her calf shortly after birth, causing great distress. Her milk is reserved for humans – high-energy feed will force her to produce around ten times more milk than she would naturally.

The stress causes painful udder infections and lameness, made worse by manure covered concrete floors. To find out more, take a look inside the factory farms>>

It doesn't have to be like this

WSPA is campaigning for sustainable farming systems that are kinder to animals and the environment, and benefit human health and reduce poverty.

We work in Latin American and Asia, where factory farming is expanding rapidly. WSPA's Model Farm Project is demonstrating how humane farming can be cost-effective and create a sustainable and secure food supply.

WSPA also leads the Asian Coalition for Farm Animals (ACFA), bringing together Asian NGOs that are working to raise awareness and lobbying for legislation. ACFA is running successful campaigns in countries including South Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia. WSPA is working to establish a similar coalition in Latin America.