

# Welfare Potential by Production System for Dairy Cattle

| Level             | Housing System                                                                                             | Pasture Access                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Space/comfort available for lying                                                                                                                                      | Welfare assessment                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 = Bad</b>    | Tie stall                                                                                                  | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Poor - severe confinement and discomfort                                                                                                                               | None                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>2</b>          | Free stall                                                                                                 | None or partial access, e.g. only for low-yielding, heifer or dry cattle only                                                                                                                                           | Low – fewer stalls than number of cows or mattresses with little bedding                                                                                               | None or limited, e.g. nothing beyond veterinary health plan                                                                            |
| <b>3 = Better</b> | Free stall                                                                                                 | Seasonal (RSPCA: at least 4 hours a day <sup>2</sup> . Compassion Good Dairy Award: at least 4 hours a day for a minimum of 100 days/year <sup>1</sup> . Beter Leven one star: 8 hours a day for 150 days) <sup>1</sup> | Better - 5% more stalls available than cows; deep bedded stalls. Pasture provides more lying comfort. (RSPCA: pasture stocking density 10-12 cows/ acre <sup>2</sup> ) | Active programme to regularly monitor and reduce lameness, mastitis, poor body condition and improve longevity <sup>2</sup>            |
|                   | Deep-bedded barn                                                                                           | As above                                                                                                                                                                                                                | High - cows are able to lie in their preferred orientation and near chosen individuals                                                                                 | As above                                                                                                                               |
| <b>4 = Best</b>   | Free stall or deep-bedded barn (Soil association: provide 10.5m <sup>2</sup> per cow indoors) <sup>3</sup> | Free choice of access between housing and pasture                                                                                                                                                                       | As above                                                                                                                                                               | Active programme to monitor and reduce lameness, mastitis, poor body condition and improved longevity, robust breeds used <sup>2</sup> |
|                   | Extensive                                                                                                  | Year-round access                                                                                                                                                                                                       | High - well-drained pasture, shelter and shade provided                                                                                                                | As above                                                                                                                               |

Organic systems can fall under better or best, depending on the type of housing provided

<sup>1</sup> Beter Leven standards <http://beterleven.dierenbescherming.nl/>

<sup>2</sup> RSPCA Freedom Food Standard <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/faranimals/standards/dairycattle>

<sup>3</sup> Soil Association Dairy standards <http://www.soilassociation.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=-LqUg6illo%3d&tabid=353>  
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