

Australian Dairy Industry Surplus Calves Policy Task Force

Terms of Reference

15 November 2021

Background

Through the Australian Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework, the industry has committed to providing best care for its animals and striving for ongoing improvements to the health and welfare of all animals throughout their lives.

Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) considers the fate of surplus calves born on Australian dairy farms as an area for focused attention under the Framework. Currently in Australia, an estimated 10-15% of calves born on dairy farms are euthanised at birth, with roughly 40% slaughtered at 5-30 days of age (for meat and pharmaceutical products)¹.

ADF, with support from research and development body Dairy Australia, has embarked on a policy development and implementation process with the aim of diverting calves away from early-life slaughter. ADF will present its policy for inclusion in the Dairy Industry Sustainability Framework.

To lead this process and guide necessary consultation, ADF is establishing an issue-specific Task Force to be chaired by an ADF nominee and to comprise relevant representatives from throughout the dairy and beef value chains. Although an ADF initiative, membership, progress and policy recommendation will also be shared with the Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC) for information purposes only.

The Surplus Calves Task Force will be subordinate and accountable to the ADF Board. The Purpose, Membership, Initial Work Program, Funding and Operations of the Task Force, and its schedule for reporting to the ADF Board, are set out below.

ADF's Goal

With assistance from the Task Force and the broader dairy community, ADF's goal is to present to its members a well-designed draft policy for socially and economically sustainable management of surplus calves.

Through the adoption of this policy, the dairy industry aims to:

1. Take further steps in achieving "best care for all animals" and striving for ongoing improvements to the "health, welfare and care of all animals throughout their lives";
2. Improve overall profitability for those in the dairy value chain, particularly at the farm level; and
3. Align more closely with the growing international trend of phasing out early-life slaughter of surplus dairy calves.

¹ Dairy Australia (2020) *Animal Care on Australian dairy farms – Animal Husbandry Survey*, Available at <https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/resource-repository/2020/08/09/animal-care-on-australian-dairy-farms-husbandry-survey-2019>

Task Force's Objective

The Task Force itself will be expected to review and deliberate policy options based on the member's experience, local and international research and policy examples from the dairy sector and other industries. Its primary objective will be to advise ADF on appropriate policy(ies) for adoption by its Board.

An additional task for the group is to consider and provide recommendations on how the policy will be implemented. To achieve this, the group will need to consider existing industry governance structures, identify any gaps, and provide options for ADF's consideration. This may include a recommendation for an ongoing role for the ADF Surplus Calves Task Force to oversee implementation of a policy.

In meeting its Objective, the Task Force is expected to consider at least the following issues:

1. Progress to date by individual businesses and organisations dealing with the surplus issue in Australia;
2. Evident, perceived or potential barriers to the adoption of dairy-beef production as an alternative to early life slaughter of surplus calves;
3. Whether there is a role for incentives to attract dairy farmers to dairy beef production;
4. Whether there is a role for disincentives for early life slaughter
5. Whether an industry policy on reducing early life slaughter is appropriate, and if so, whether such a policy should be quantitative or qualitative;
6. Effective ways of communicating to industry to achieve widespread adoption of beneficial changes to production practices; and
7. Methods of communicating to the broader community the beneficial changes being adopted by industry.

Membership

Membership should comprise 10-15 individuals with a strong interest in surplus calf management and in achieving an outcome best suited to the industry. A short list will be provided to the ADF Board for approval. The following membership will be prioritised:

- Chair – selected by ADF
- Deputy Chair
- Individuals with knowledge covering at least the following:
- Applicants should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the issues associated with surplus dairy calves. This could be based on practical pre-farm gate experience, in-market skills/experience and/or research and extension work. Appointments will be made to ensure a range of perspectives, experiences and geographic locations are represented.
- People with the following backgrounds and experience are encouraged to apply: dairy farming, milk processing, post-farm gate beef supply chain (e.g. meat processing, calf rearing), genetics, animal health/welfare science, consumer and community engagement.
- Those who are already engaged in this issue and have participated in related industry events and programs are strongly encouraged to apply.
- It will be important that Task Force members are willing to work in a constructive process whereby different perspectives are considered.

Operations and Resources

The Task Force will operate until a policy recommendation is formed, which will also include a recommendation regarding the ongoing role of the group (if any). It is expected that any ongoing group will have a defined operational period.

In terms of resourcing, technical support will be provided by Dairy Australia and ADF when requested. Secretariat support will be provided and funded by ADF (utilising the AHA service level agreement) with the Secretariat reporting to the Chair and the Task Force. The Secretariat will be chosen on existing expertise

associated with dairy beef production, a willingness to progress this initiative with enthusiasm and a capacity to facilitate workshops and group meetings when and where appropriate.

Approximate time commitment: 4-6 workshops + teleconferences, with additional between meeting document review. Maximum expected time 6 days.

With ADF approval, the Task Force may establish sub-groups for dealing in detail with specific issues and making recommendations to the Task Force. With prior approval from the Task Force, a sub-group may seek advice from external sources to deliver specific advice to the Task Force.

Decisions of the Task Force will be by consensus.

Attendee payment

Salaried employee members of the Task Force are expected to have their associated costs, which are expected to be minimal, covered by their respective business or organisation. Non-salaried members will have their costs met by ADF following the provision of adequate invoices.

Payrates as per ADF sitting fee rate of pay.

Technical input provided by DA and ADPF will be accepted as in-kind contributions from these organisations on behalf of their funders.

Reporting

Once in place, the Task Force must report to the ADF Board via ADF's CEO. The group will provide regular reports with a thorough description of progress to date, any significant current or anticipated issues, and intended actions ahead. A reporting timeline will be agreed between the Task Force Chair and ADF's CEO once the Task Force is in place.

Initial Work Program

The following is suggested as an initial work program, with all six steps to be completed before April 2022:

1. Appoint the Secretariat [ADF]
2. Decide a Chair and Deputy Chair [ADF]
3. Consider candidates and finalise membership [ADF]
4. Draft an Operations Plan
5. Consult with dairy and beef industry [Task Force]
6. Present the proposed policy position to ADF Board [Task Force]

Media

Any public discussion through the media and other means is to remain the responsibility of ADF.

Cessation of Task Force

The Task Force will be stood down by ADF at the recommendation of a policy to ADF Board. At the recommendation of a policy and any potential future role of the group, the ADF Board will discuss progress and agree on a way forward. This may require another term for the Task Force or similar.