

Uptake and use of cattle vaccines in the UK

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The aim of this study was to investigate current uptake and use of vaccines available to the dairy and beef industry in the UK. The existing evidence indicates a lack of compliance from farmers with regards to correct application of a vaccine. A questionnaire was distributed to dairy and beef farmers between September and October 2011. The questionnaire collected information on which vaccines were used and how and why farmers were using these vaccines. The majority of respondents administered vaccines within the timeframe recommended on the datasheet. This was carried out correctly more often for first vaccinations (87% of farmers carried this out correctly) than for the second dose within a primary course (46% of farmers carried this out correctly). The proportion of farmers vaccinating earlier than the youngest recommended age varied between vaccines, with higher levels (18-20%) of incorrect use seen for vaccines against respiratory and clostridial diseases. The efficacy of disease control may be improved with correct use of vaccines; only 34% of farmers indicated that they excluded certain animals. When asked to specify which animals were excluded from vaccination, 23% indicated that they excluded sick and injured animals. This suggests that more farmers need to be made aware that immunocompromised animals will not produce the most effective immune response after vaccination and there is a risk that vaccinating these animals may worsen their disease. This survey indicated that vaccination is heavily relied upon to control disease. It was noted that farmers consider vaccines to be highly effective, to the extent where other disease control measures may be compromised. The research was confined to the UK; however conclusions from the study are expected to be relevant in countries where vaccination of cattle is common. Although excellent research continuous to develop novel methods to control disease, results of this study support that successful disease control by vaccination is dependent on more than the quality aspects of the vaccine alone.