

23 September 2019

HIGHER WELFARE ROSÉ VEAL AND BEEF



THE BUITELAAR GROUP

Buitelaar was established in 1922 and specialises in providing higher welfare supply chain solutions with a focus on British rosé veal and beef. The business has diversified to provide further ancillary products and services to support and facilitate the supply chain. This includes the provision of an on-farm technical team advising on best practice with regard to housing, nutrition and higher welfare practices, milk replacement products and a meat sales division which ensures the best returns for the finished products that can be shared with the farmer.

For more information on the benefits of a higher welfare system for calves please see our [dairy calf information sheet](#)

Buitelaar's Business Key Objectives:

- Sustainability within the supply chain with a focus on reducing carbon footprint
- Higher animal welfare
- Calf health and commitment to best practice
- Consistency in the production of excellent quality finished goods
- Commitment to British farming and future generations, via education and collaboration on research projects with the likes of the Royal Agricultural University

THE SUPPLY CHAIN

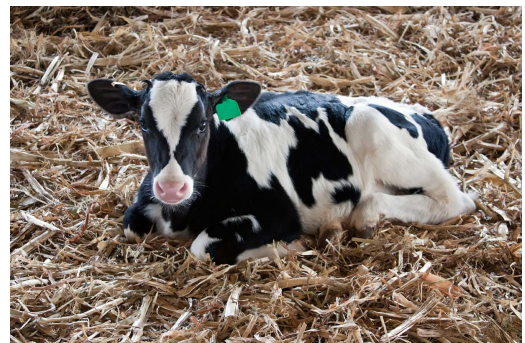
Buitelaar has built a sustainable integrated supply chain for dairy bull and beef cross calves which cannot be utilised for milking on the dairy farm. Buitelaar has also been successful in reducing the unnecessary culling of calves from TB restricted herds by offering specialist government approved fattening units across the country.

The Buitelaar supply chain incorporates higher welfare calf collection centres which are strategically located in dairy farming areas. These centres help to prevent calves being sold into livestock markets while improving traceability. The collection centres also act as a point where Buitelaar can provide advice and feedback to the dairy farmer on best practice in terms of calf management. This can help farmers produce a healthier animal which is more efficient and therefore more carbon friendly, as well as ultimately having better profitability for the dairy beef farmer.

Buitelaar are committed to future proofing the dairy beef industry and therefore, as well as building strong relationships with dairy farmers and managing state of the art collection centre facilities, they are committed to developing the sector through applied research. Buitelaar is working in partnership with the Royal Agricultural University to develop codes of practice for the sector through on-farm trials.

This case study highlights Buitelaar's role in the following key areas:

- Collection centres and Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) supply chain
- The Royal Agricultural University farmer education and trial facility
- The role of Buitelaar in maintaining a viable and interlinked supply chain and a sustainable livelihood for farmers.



This case study also provides more information about Buitelaar's excellent work to provide a better life for dairy calves.

COLLECTION CENTRES



Figure 1 - Calves at a collection centre

In the past, calves from dairy farms bought to be reared for beef were mainly sourced through markets. This presented a number of challenges, a major one being the level of compromise on animal welfare in market environments, subjecting animals to long journeys and the stress of the market environment. It was also apparent that auction marts were not a sustainable platform for the marketing of beef calves and there was little possibility of tracing them back to the rearing farm.

In 2013, the first Buitelaar calf collection centre was opened which soon resulted in the decision to stop sourcing calves through markets. This means that 100% of the supply chain is now sourced directly from the farm of origin (Figure 1). This means Buitelaar can maintain traceability across their supply so that any calf can be tracked back to the dairy farm where the calves were born, allowing for the implementation of programmes such as research into the reduction of antibiotics.

By creating a direct relationship with dairy farmers and by agreeing a stable pricing mechanism with them, the confidence of farmers working with Buitelaar has grown tremendously, reflected in the growth of calf collections from 30 a week in 2013 to now averaging 1,500 per week across the country.

Traceability is also being improved by standardising the method of data collection. The same software is being used across farms so that data is collected on the same platform, making data transfer quick and easy.

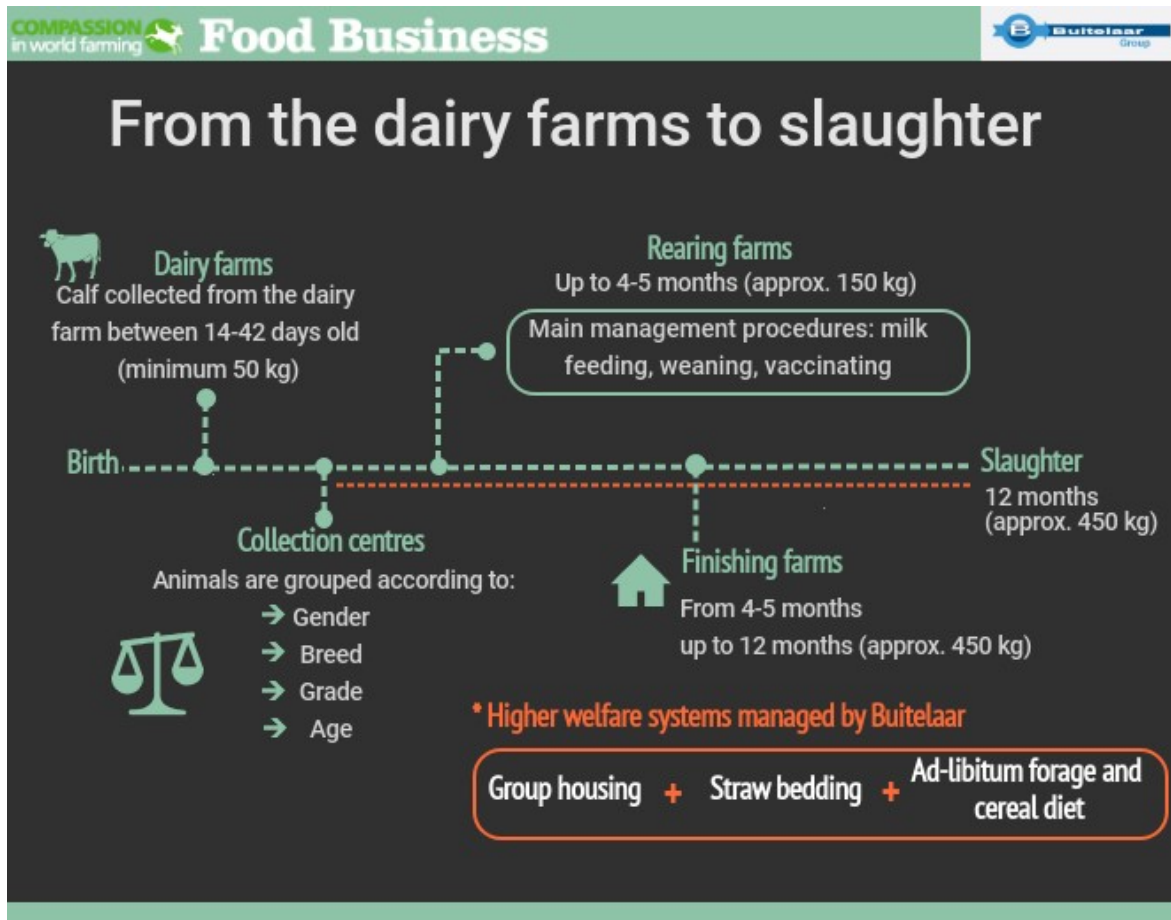


Figure 2 - Rosé veal supply chain from the birth of the calf to slaughter. From the collection centre the calves are under Buitelaar's care, reared in higher welfare systems.

HIGHER WELFARE – A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Figure 2 shows the supply chain from the birth of the calf to slaughter, including rearing and finishing ages and weights. All calves under Buitelaar's care are reared in higher welfare systems that meet [CIWF's Good Calf Award criteria](#) and Buitelaar is engaging with the dairy farms that supply the calves to help ensure they are provided with higher welfare conditions from birth (Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3 – All calves are reared in higher welfare systems

All calf rearing units are visited and audited at least 6 times in the first 12 weeks on farm using KPIs to score the unit on key issues, such as provision of straw, feed, fresh water and ventilation. Dependent on the rating of the performance indicator (1-5), an action plan is devised between the technical team and the farmer to improve standards and ensure the highest rearing conditions are maintained.

Every dairy farm is inspected before supplying calves to Buitelaar. Dairy farms are assessed on a variety of areas regarding early stage calf rearing, including colostrum management, health records and calf housing. At the point when calves enter collection centres, they are weighed and graded and from here a daily live weight gain assessment is made. From this assessment, Buitelaar are able to gain an understanding of how well the calves are performing up to this point. If there appears to be a correlation with underperforming calves to a certain supplying dairy farm, a member of the Calf Tech Team will visit the farm and assess management procedures in early stage rearing such as colostrum protocols and advise on any areas that need improving. This connection with the dairy farm helps to produce a healthy calf and a sustainable and consistent margin for the farmer. It also allows Buitelaar to implement higher welfare standards that go beyond their collection centres.

Figure 4 - Characteristics of Buitelaar's higher welfare system for calves under the Rosé veal supply chain and their benefits. Buitelaar also engages with supplying dairy farms to secure higher welfare conditions for the calves from birth.

Calves under Buitelaar's care have access to:

Straw bedding

Thermal comfort and a safe place to lie down. Reduced risk of leg injuries

Group housing

Opportunity to socialise and interact with other calves

Plenty of space - 2.5 m² per calf (up to 150kg)

Space to lie down comfortably as well as having a good level of activity

Appropriate diet and roughage ad libitum

Promote rumen development, prevent hunger

Limited transport times (under 8 hours)

Reduced stress and fear. Reduced risk of lesions



APPROVED FINISHING AND REARING UNITS (AFU'S)

Bovine TB is the most significant animal health problem facing cattle farmers in England. The impacts on dairy farmers, their families and the communities in which they work can be devastating. Due to the restricted movement of animals from TB affected areas, producers are often unable to find a market for their surplus young stock. Historically this has meant producers would often find no other option but to destroy calves on farm.

Buitelaar have worked hard over the last five years to overcome the TB issue facing UK farmers. They have done this by providing an outlet for dairy farmers coming under TB restriction and helping beef farmers to protect their business against the risk of becoming "shut down" by TB.

Buitelaar run an "orange" calf collection¹ giving TB restricted herds the ability to sell their calves into the supply chain through licensed AFUs (approved rearing and finishing units) rather than sending the calves direct to slaughter, as many would have to due to space restrictions. Approved Finishing Units help control the incidence of TB whilst improving welfare on TB restricted farms, due to the tight regulations surrounding AFU licensed holdings which reduces the likelihood of TB restricted cattle coming into contact with other herds. For this reason, Buitelaar work with a number of AFU producers who rear and finish cattle in the same higher welfare system as non-restricted holdings. The operators of these units are able to purchase and house calves from TB restricted herds for rearing and

¹ Orange markets or calf collections allow farmers to sell cattle from restricted herds that have passed a clear test in the previous 90 days in an open market situation. Buyers can include the owners of AFUs.

finishing, sending cattle either direct to slaughter or to another AFU. This can assist with preventing animal welfare issues and help alleviate financial difficulties for farms under TB restrictions.

AFUs can either be built to the required specification or existing buildings can be altered to meet the essential AFU criteria including (but not limited to):

- Badger proof fencing (dug approx. 0.5m below ground and extended 0.3m parallel to the ground)
- Sheet gates up to 1.5 m (galvanised metal/ stock board)
- Drop gates/ barriers to no less than 7.5cm from hardstanding

The Buitelaar Tech Team are on hand to assist Buitelaar producers to assess proposed units for AFU licensing and provide advice in converting cattle housing to meet the required AFU specification.

ANTIBIOTIC REDUCTION PROJECT

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) trial unit enabled important work to be carried out into antibiotic reduction whilst ensuring that welfare was never compromised. Researchers at the RAU were able to cut antibiotic use by 75% over two batches of calves by employing a new treatment protocol and ensuring extremely high hygiene standards and animal handling throughout the unit. This achievement was recognized in the Antibiotic Guardian Awards (2019) with the RAU shortlisted in the Animal Health, Agriculture and Food Supply category for their project 'Rearing dairy bull calves responsibly ensuring high welfare and productivity'.

THE ROLE OF BUITELAAR IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Technical Team: Buitelaar have a dedicated team of calf specialists located across the country who are on hand to give advice and support to producers in the supply chain, focusing on early stage rearing when calf health is most critical.

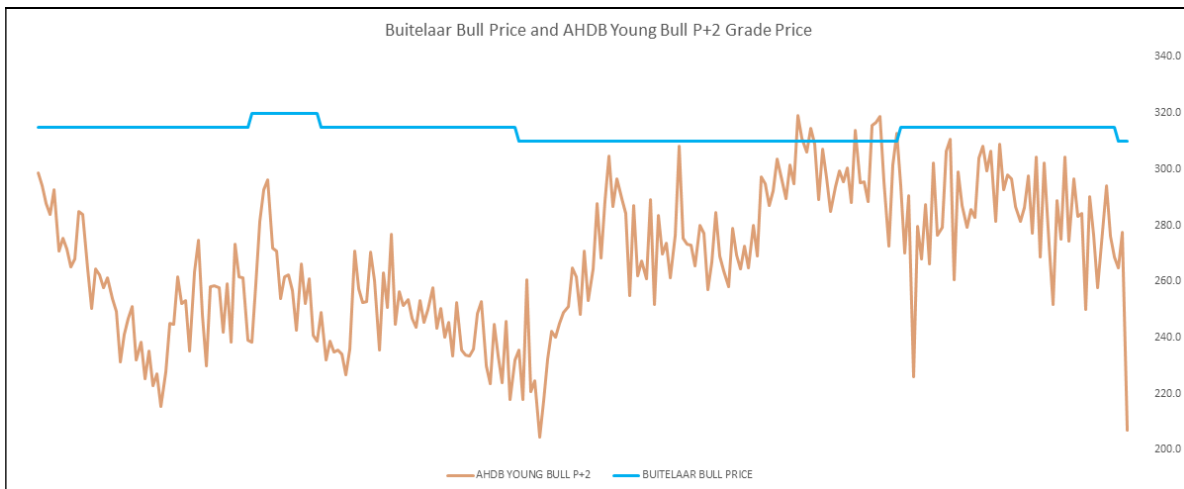
The technical team supports farmers by providing help and advice on key management procedures, such as the first milk feed, vaccination administration and throughout the weaning process. The team devise tailored feed plans and protocols for each farm to best promote higher health status and therefore better growth rates. This not only ensures farmers understand the importance of and meet animal welfare requirements, but it also guarantees all calves are produced to the same high standard.



Figure 5 – Buitelaar work closely with farmers in their supply chain

End Products & Safeguarding Beef Farming Futures: The Buitelaar scheme prides itself on being able to offer farmers a fixed forward minimum price for finished cattle, which allows farmers to evaluate and build a business plan based on future outcomes.

Below is a graph which demonstrates the sustainable pricing model which aims to reduce volatility in the price paid on a dead weight basis. The graph compares the Buitelaar price against the AHDB Average price paid on a P+2 young bull from 2014 to end of 2018 (P+2 referring to the carcass classification).



To provide a sustainable pricing model, the Buitelaar Group actively markets the end products both in the UK, Europe and the Far East, to ensure best returns that can be shared back through the supply chain, thus protecting farming futures. The team supplies both the retail and food service sectors.

Key partners and advocates of the supply chain include Morrisons, OSI Food Solutions, McDonald's, Whole Foods and Mitchells & Butler's along with a number of independent food service operations both nationally and locally.

The team are continually assessing new opportunities and are currently developing a platform to make direct delivery using an online store, this strategy having been developed as the business recognises the importance of getting closer to the end consumer to further safeguard the supply chain.

Testimonials

Peter Mitchell – OSI Food Solutions- UK Purchasing Manager

'OSI Food Solutions have an excellent well-established relationship with the Buitelaar Group. They excel in providing us with a consistent product which is produced from a sustainable supply chain with high animal welfare throughout the animals' life. Their attention to detail and determination to continually improve on-farm standards is outstanding within our industry'

Joe Mannion – Head of Livestock Procurement / External Meat Sales – WM Morrisons Supermarkets PLC

'The Buitelaar Group are an outstanding supplier and provide the Woodheads group with a consistent, good quality product. Key attributes of the supply chain include, traceability, animal health, welfare and genuine passion for British agriculture and the progression of beef farming in the supply chain'