

## Preventing Animal Disease

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

Disease prevention is crucial for our calves, especially in the first weeks after birth. Young calves can easily contract diseases. Calves have no antibodies when born and have only limited natural immunity, so it is vital that animal disease be prevented. If calves contract diarrhoea, for instance, their alimentary canal can be damaged, leaving them vulnerable to other infections.

#### Our aim:

The VanDrie Group is keen to reduce the risk of encroachment of animal disease. We do our best to test at the calf's farm of origin for the presence of conditions such as BVD (bovine virus diarrhoea).

#### Our methods:

- We ensure our calves have decent housing, care and feeding. We insist that this also be the case at the dairy farm where the calf is born and where it stays for a minimum of two weeks after birth.
- We supply our husbandries with healthy calves, paying particular attention to the health of the navel, joints and faeces.
- Our Safety Guard system allows us to read off each calf's information from its ear tag and means we can be sure of the precise medical history of every calf we buy.
- The VanDrie Group observes a period of quarantine in its calf holding areas so that we can monitor the calves and intervene where necessary.
- The VanDrie Group participates in the SKV Veal Calf Tracing Guarantee System (GTSKV). This system was set up so that calves imported to the Netherlands could be traced over the whole of their journey. Traceability is a major part of sickness prevention and is vital when infectious animal diseases break out or are threatening to do so.
- We enter into dialogue with the dairy farming industry, vets and other stakeholders to reinforce the measures that we take for sickness prevention.

#### The partners we work with:

- Dairy farmers
- Veterinary surgeons
- Inspection bodies
- Calf traders

### STATUS

 Issue observed    ongoing    successfully completed

## Monetising manure

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

The world population is expected to grow to 9 billion by 2050. This increase will cause growing, and changing, patterns of consumption. However, global phosphate reserves are dwindling sharply: the earth only has enough known reserves for 70 to 100 years at current usage rates. If we run out of phosphates, food production will be in jeopardy worldwide: there will be a shortage of essential minerals all over the world. We are urging people to take a fresh look at how manure is used, and to make the refinement of manure part of their practice. In the Netherlands, manure is viewed largely as a waste product. However, the VanDrie Group regards manure as a valuable raw material in the biobased economy, packed with minerals, organic materials and energy.

#### Our aim:

We would like to produce a high-quality product from manure, at a profit, thus extracting added value from the so-called manure surplus. Recyclable ingredients in manure include not only well-known soil enrichers such as nitrogen, phosphates and potassium but also other useful substances: proteins, amino acids and fatty acids. The trend away from disposing of manure and towards treating it as a raw material will lead to a more cycle-based economy.

#### Our methods:

The application of a layer of thermal treatment on the manure - in which the organic material is heat-treated in a sealed reactor - is needed to kick-start the recycling of its valuable contents. The VanDrie Group believes in low-input reclamation of energy from waste, as opposed to the prohibitively expensive method of co-fermentation. The economic thinking behind this is that we really can have cradle-to-cradle monetisation - an animal can yield its full value in returns. This principle achieves added value beyond the mere value of fertilisation and the energy produced from manure fermentation.

#### The partners we work with:

Our initiative to achieve economic growth from our calves' manure in balance with nature and the environment is known as Mest vol waarden; it is a joint venture between the VanDrie Group and Wageningen UR.

### STATUS

 Issue observed    ongoing    successfully completed

## Responsible use of antibiotics

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

The use of antibiotics within and outside of cattle farming is under close scrutiny. The VanDrie Group is a trendsetter in its approach to this problem and we achieve our excellent results in this regard by involving the whole chain.

#### Our aim:

In April 2010, the then Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) decided that the use of antibiotics should be halved by 2013 as compared to 2009 levels. Thanks to the efforts of our employees, calf farmers and veterinarians, together we have achieved a 50% reduction in the use of antibiotics in the calf industry in a period of five years. The VanDrie Group is committed to the responsible use of antibiotics.

#### Our methods:

We are active in a plethora of ways to boost calves' immunity levels and to prevent sickness. These initiatives include the use of homeopathic substances, bacterial cultures, new protocols and respiratory vaccinations.

- For several years now, a number of calf farmers have been employing homeopathic substances to support efforts to use fewer antibiotics. This is a method that we ourselves developed, and it is delivering positive results on a large scale. The calf husbandries that began using homeopathic remedies are ones that on average were using 4% more antibiotics than other VanDrie farms. Yet for 2012 and the first half of 2013, their antibiotics usage was actually 10% lower, while their average production was in each case the same as or even better than farms that were not using homeopathic substances. Clearly, the VanDrie Group is not a research institute, and it is not our aim to prove whether there is a scientific basis to homeopathy. What we do wish to do is explore all possible avenues together with our calf farmers to attain a responsible lower usage of antibiotics.
- Also, calves' immune systems can often be given a boost using bacterial cultures. Cultures are dispersed weekly by vaporiser at 20 of our farms to encourage good bacteria to displace the bad ones that cause illness. We are undertaking this project together with the NobleBio company and with the Dutch Federation of Agriculture and Horticulture (LTO Nederland). The results will be made known during 2014.
- In partnership with the University of Utrecht, 48 calf husbandries, including 36 belonging to the VanDrie Group, are taking part in research to draw up new protocols to reduce the incidence of MRSA and resistance to antibiotics. Sickness can be avoided when the rules and agreements to which we adhere are reviewed, in concert with efforts to cleanse and disinfect farms before fresh calves arrive.
- In addition, the way in which vaccinating calves against respiratory infections affected the use of antibiotics was investigated at 40 husbandries in 2011-2012. The calves that received an inoculation against lung infection needed 15% less antibiotics, according to the test results from Wageningen UR.
- The national antibiotics policy was tightened in 2013 with the introduction of a measure known as UDD (the Dutch acronym Uitsluitend Door Dierenarts, 'Only by a vet'). Now that only vets are allowed to administer antibiotics in the Netherlands, the substances are no longer permitted to be held at cattle farms. Cattle farmers are only allowed to administer antibiotics or to keep them in stock if they meet strict animal health management and antibiotic usage stipulations.

#### Our partners:

- Calf farmers
- Veterinary surgeons
- Academic institutions, including Wageningen UR and the University of Utrecht
- NGOs such as the Netherlands Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Dierenbescherming)
- Inspection bodies
- The Dutch government

### STATUS

Issue observed   ongoing   successfully completed

## Producing trustworthy veal responsibly

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

Our first responsibility as a veal producer is to ensure that reliable, responsible food products are brought onto the market. The VanDrie Group works to the highest standards and its work is inspected by the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA).

#### Our aim:

Safety and quality are the top priority and we strive to guarantee that 100%. Food safety and animal welfare are safeguarded by our quality system, Safety Guard, which is ISO 22000-certified and also incorporates accreditations including BRC and IFS. On top of the annual official audits for reaccreditation that are carried out by the NVWA and Lloyd's Register, our Safety Guard is also regularly assessed and scrutinised by the quality control services of a number of chains and producers. We are keen to collaborate with relevant stakeholders on controllable and transparent quality systems for all business operations.

#### Our methods:

To make sure that every aspect can be monitored, we have made our Safety Guard food security system an inseparable part of what we do at the VanDrie Group. This is why the logo bears the wording 'Controlled Quality Veal'. We achieve maximum food safety by optimally implementing a number of measures:

- Our tracking & tracing system guarantees the traceability of calves, feed and raw materials, as well as individual cuts of meat.
- We exclusively use checked feeds, i.e. those that come from producers certified to our own GMP+ standard.
- We only work with veal farmers that are certified members of the IKB Veal Calves Scheme (IKB Vleeskalveren; see [www.ikbkalveren.nl](http://www.ikbkalveren.nl)).
- We do not deliver calves to slaughterhouses during medication withdrawal periods.
- We have a stringent policy on reducing the use of antibiotics and are undertaking a range of test programmes to increase our calves' vitality.

Extensive controls are carried out at all stages of our production process. The Foundation for Quality Guarantee of the Veal Sector (Stichting Kwaliteitsgarantie Vleeskalveren, SKV) checks the VanDrie Group's entire chain to make sure no growth promoters are used. Urine, blood, feed and fat samples complete the inspections. The SKV carries out its checks at every stage of production: in feed production, at the calf husbandries and at the slaughterhouses.

Veal fits perfectly in a healthy diet and we are associated with the Conscious Choice Foundation (Stichting Ik Kies Bewust). Our veal products are recognised by the well-known check mark symbol on their packaging. This logo for food choice is the only one that is permitted in the Netherlands by both the national government and the European Commission.

#### Our partners:

- Calf farmers
- Foundation for Quality Guarantee of the Veal Sector
- Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
- Conscious Choice Foundation (Stichting Ik Kies Bewust)

### STATUS

Issue observed   ongoing   successfully completed

## A responsible level of animal welfare

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

The VanDrie Group sets great store by animal welfare. The group was awarded the Beter Leven seal of approval by the Netherlands Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 2009. This means that our veal meets higher requirements for animal welfare than other products on the market.

You can tell Beter Leven veal by the packaging it is sold in at the shops: the Beter Leven seal of approval is found on a sticker on top of the actual packaging.

#### Our aim:

A calf's welfare ultimately affects its health and thus potentially also food safety, as well as determining in large measure how the veal products made from it will taste. For this reason, we are keen that a calf's whole environment, from its stall to transportation and from feed to bodily health, are optimal, so that we can guarantee calf welfare throughout the chain, as far as is possible.

#### Our methods:

- Beter Leven calves must be kept in spacious, well-lit and ventilated stalls. We improved the ventilation technology in the stalls in 2013. Testing of our special new types of stall floor, which are intended to promote good walking and lying behaviour, and in turn improve calf welfare, is now entering its second phase.
- Our calves are able to eat and drink as a whole group. As well as calf milk, they are fed roughage to enable them to ruminate, which stimulates natural immune defences and promotes good health.
- Since 2013, we have been including a higher percentage of roughage in the form of muesli as a standard component of our calves' fare. This has resulted in an average haemoglobin content of 6 millimol per litre for Beter Leven calves, well above the legal minimum of 4.5 millimol, ensuring that not a single calf will approach the anaemia danger zone.
- The VanDrie Group has also taken the initiative over 2013-14 to test probiotic food supplements - live microbe colonies - in the place of antibiotics.
- Transportation of the calves, too, should be as animal-friendly as possible. We achieve that by keeping transportation time and distance as short as possible and seeking to provide the best possible climatic conditions in vehicles. Transportation is via Comfort Class trucks, with full climate control and equipped with cameras to enable drivers to monitor the welfare of calves.
- How we will fulfil our promises to the Netherlands Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is all documented in the VanDrie Group's Safety Guard quality system. Lloyd's monitors this and reports its findings back to the Netherlands Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In addition, the SKV ensures that growth promoters are not found in our animals.
- A system aimed at customers has been put in place to trace our veal. Users are equipped with passwords giving them easy online access to all the production details of their own veal purchasing.
- In 2013, the calf facilities at Peter's Farm, run by the Derks family in Sambeek, were designated Beter Leven 'stalls with a view' (zichtstal).

#### Our partners:

- Calf farmers
- The Netherlands Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Dierenbescherming)
- Foundation for Quality Guarantee of the Veal Sector (SKV)
- Academic institutions, including Wageningen UR
- Inspection bodies

### STATUS

Issue observed   ongoing   successfully completed

## Striving to run a closed cycle

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

The VanDrie Group's efforts are aimed at obtaining maximum savings with minimum burden on the environment. We strive to waste as little as possible, to reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to wring maximum value out of waste flows. Moreover, we want our commercial operations to be carried out in harmony with the world around us, with the environment being impacted as little as possible by our activities.

#### Our aim:

Our closed-cycle ideal is based on the cradle-to-cradle principle, which entails recycling, maximum use and thereby a bare minimum of actual waste production. In a broader sense, this principle is part of our desire to decrease the group's CO<sub>2</sub> footprint by reducing waste.

#### Our methods:

- At all our Dutch companies, we employ an Environmental Management System based on the principles of ISO 14001. This system requires attention to be devoted to noise pollution, the reduction of odours, water usage and water fouling, waste production and energy consumption.
- Our animal feed companies and calf abattoirs conform to the MJA-3 Energy Efficiency Plan, the aim of which is to cut energy consumption by 2% each year from 2013 to 2016 in comparison to the 2011 levels.
- Our subsidiary company, Oukro, specialises in the processing of the calfskins. From 2009 to 2013, the amount of salt they used to process each skin was reduced from 6.7kg to just over 5.4kg. In addition, Oukro is seeking to deliver more and more of its skins fresh, obviating the need to cure them. Oukro was delivering 25% of its calfskins non-cured in 2013; the target for 2014 is to raise this to 30%.
- We are committed to water purification, especially at Oukro, where salts are not allowed to contaminate the water. Our slaughterhouses and Eurolat have their own water sources and water purification installations.
- All cardboard meat boxes used by our Dutch calf slaughterhouses bear the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) seal of approval. Our box supplier has set as its sustainability target the reduction of its fossil fuel CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from its factories by 20% by 2020 as compared to 2005 levels.
- We endeavour to monetise our waste flows as much as possible. Examples include our ideas - as mentioned elsewhere - to process manure, and our sales abroad of organs and residual products of calves for which there is not such a valuable market in the Netherlands.
- Equally, however, we attain this aim by saving energy and arranging our transport operations as efficiently as possible in terms of time and kilometres. In addition, the VanDrie Group attaches great importance to collaboration and a sector-wide approach.
- We use special packaging materials that keep meat fresher for longer, which means less wastage and fewer journeys: beneficial both in terms of the environment and lower costs.

#### Our partners:

- Calf farmers
- The packaging industry
- NGOs

### STATUS

Issue observed   ongoing   successfully completed

## Looking after our staff

### STATUS



#### The challenge we face:

There is more to Corporate Social Responsibility than can be measured or seen from the outside. At least as important as looking after our animals, our products and our procedures is the responsibility we have as a company to care for the people who work for us. The VanDrie Group is particularly serious about that responsibility where in-house staff are concerned. We exercise care in terms of people's safety, their health and the opportunities they have with us for career growth.

#### Our aim:

What the VanDrie Group wants to see is all its staff working in as safe an environment as possible. We also want our people to have personal development opportunities and proper chances for career growth. To achieve this, we seek to create the right circumstances to incentivise our staff to play an active role in safeguarding their own good health.

#### Our methods:

- Once every four years, our staff have an opportunity to take part in health check-ups. One of the components of this examination, 'The Fitness Test', provides a good overview of the physical and mental health of each participating employee. In 2013, 96% of Ekro staff invited to take part in the examination did so.
- The VanDrie Group encourages personal growth and development. This has received continuous attention over the past year by way of further education opportunities, training courses and individual learning pathways. For example, in 2013 all Oukro staff were given a full internal training course or refresher course. The management is taking a communication course that will be completed in 2014. Ekro and ESA will be starting up a programme during 2014 that will help staff to be more flexible, by training them in extending their skill sets so that they can work in several departments.

#### Our partners:

- Health and Safety at Work (Arbo) institutions
- Group employees
- Academic institutions, including the SVO's professional training for food workers

### STATUS

 Issue observed    ongoing    successfully completed