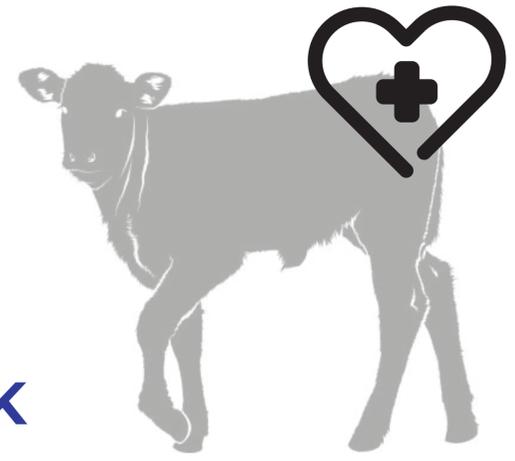


SUPPORTING CALF HEALTH PRACTICES IN DAIRY FARMING

WHAT EUROPEAN CITIZENS THINK



Improving calf health and welfare in dairy farming is gaining attention, with early-life microbiome management practices such as colostrum treatments, probiotics, and prolonged cow-calf contact offering promising solutions. While these practices are scientifically supported, their broader uptake depends on public acceptance—an area that remains under-explored in Europe.



WHAT'S THE CHALLENGE?

Even well-intentioned animal welfare interventions can face public resistance if perceived as costly, unnatural, or incompatible with local farming traditions. Understanding public views is essential for developing communication strategies that support both animal health and societal expectations.



WHAT DID WE FIND?

The HoloRuminant project surveyed 3,220 citizens in Finland, France, Ireland, and Poland to assess acceptance of four microbiome-related calf health practices. Findings include:



Acceptance varies by type of intervention, demographics, and information framing.



Greater familiarity with farming and microbiomes increases acceptance.



Providing additional information, especially on costs and environmental impacts, can reduce support—particularly for prolonged cow-calf contact.



Women and older adults favour prolonged cow-calf contact, while younger people show more support for probiotics.



Views on dairy consumption and national farming traditions shape acceptance patterns differently across countries.





WHY IT MATTERS?

FOR FARMERS AND ADVISORS:



- Highlight both health and food safety benefits when discussing calf health practices with consumers.
- Be mindful that some practices may receive more support than others—adapting farm communication accordingly is key.

FOR AGRI-FOOD STAKEHOLDERS:



- Avoid overloading consumers with technical or financial details; focus on clear, relatable benefits.
- Frame marketing and product information with attention to age and gender differences in consumer preferences.

FOR POLICYMAKERS:



- Animal health interventions should be supported not only through regulation but also through public information strategies that address social acceptance.
- Local and national farming traditions must be considered when designing welfare standards and support schemes.



WHAT'S NEXT ?



Aligning calf health interventions with public expectations through targeted, thoughtful communication can help dairy farming practices evolve sustainably while maintaining consumer trust across Europe.

FIND OUT MORE:



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement № 101000213