

Cattle caesarean study to help post-surgery success

The second stage of an XLVets nationwide audit on cattle caesarean procedures has come to a close, with more than 4,500 case studies submitted from 49 XLVets veterinary practices across the UK.

It is anticipated the final results of the audit will help guide farmers and vets in maximising a cow's return to full health after surgery.



The audit was devised by Sotirios Karvountzis of Shepton Veterinary Group in Somerset.

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Data collection

Of the 4,500 case studies, around 3,000 stem from suckler herds and the remainder are from dairy herds.

- In the first stage of the audit, data was collected on aspects such as the reason for the caesareans – for example, deformed calves, twins, calving difficulty, the cleanliness of the cow and the operating technique.
- The second phase involved monitoring the postoperative care and the animal's recovery over the following two weeks. Further information was gathered on, for example, the speed of healing of the wound and weight gain of the calf.
- The final phase of the study is ongoing and involves monitoring the health and performance of the cows and heifers over the 18 months post-surgery. It will include information on subsequent performance and fertility, and will enable the factors affecting the success of operations to be evaluated.

Meaningful conclusions

Dr Karvountzis explained: "We had run a pilot scheme here at the Shepton practice, but a larger dataset was needed to draw some meaningful conclusions. So this is the first study of this scale to have been carried out, and it would not have been possible without the collaborative spirit of XLVets practices and the cooperation of their farm clients.

"It is too early to report on preliminary findings lest these bias the next phase of data collection.

"However, we expect the final results to be of benefit to both farmers and vets as they will identify the factors affecting surgery success, and the actions required to maximise the future health and performance of cows and heifers."