

The benefits of producing clean cattle

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In England and Wales the Disease Control Orders prohibit anyone sending animals to an abattoir unless they are to be slaughtered within 48 hours. This means animals must be clean enough for slaughter for food within 48 hours and cannot be returned if this is not achieved.

In addition, dung contamination causes irreparable damage to hides, which in 2004 was estimated to cost the British tanning industry £20 million per annum. Many tanneries are forced to import foreign hides, paying premium prices, which might otherwise be passed back to UK producers. Tanneries also select suppliers of hides by region.

This means that even if only a few local producers deliver cattle for slaughter dirty, all producers in the region will find it difficult to sell their hides to tanneries. UK farmers stand to benefit directly or indirectly from producing clean cattle. The consequences of delivering dirty cattle include:

- additional costs where dirty animals are retained in the lairage to be cleaned up at the abattoir
- cost of reduced slaughter line speed
- reduced carcass value due to excessive trimming
- reduced value of by-products – i.e. leather
- loss of the entire carcase