

- The common belief that defensive cows are better mothers is untrue. Defensive cows were no different to non-defensive cows in the maternal care shown to their calf (eg licking, suckling) and there was no effect on calf growth rate.
- Over the monitoring period both youngstock and cows were consistent in their temperament during handling in the crush. Cows were also consistent over parities in their defensiveness of the calf.

routine handling grew more slowly during fattening. Extremely calm growth rate compared to extremely

Project Detail

Project date: 2011-2016.

The project was led by Simon.turner@sruc.ac.uk of the Animal and Veterinary Sciences Group in collaboration with staff from the Future Farming Systems Group at SRUC.

This work was funded by the Scottish Government Strategic Research Portfolio. The research presented above was partially replicated on a leading commercial farm to validate the results. We gratefully acknowledge the openness and help of the owner and staff of this unit.

Link to further information: Two SRUC technical notes have been produced which give suggestions on ways of modifying existing handling systems to improve cattle movement (TN564) and suggestions for new builds (TN 565).

Summary printed 10/2015

The Impact

Flightiness in youngstock is heritable – with the genetic likelihood being between 0.4 and 0.6. There is also a tendency of recently calved cows to attack a handler (maternal defensiveness) may also be heritable.

Genetic selection for moderate temperament could, therefore, have safety and productivity.

Further Information

For more information on farm business management, beef systems and breeding contact SAC Consulting beef and sheep specialist at beefandsheep@sac.co.uk