Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands
Jim Fairlie MSP

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mark Ruskell MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs Committee

By email: rural.committee@parliament.scot

18 November 2026

Dear Mark,

Calving Interval condition in the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS)

I am writing to draw the Committee's attention to an announcement that the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs on Thursday 29 October 2026 at the NFU Scotland Autumn Conference regarding a potential future amendment to the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme.

The published text of the speech can be found here - NFUS Autumn Conference 2026: Rural Affairs Secretary - 29 October 2026 - gov.scot.

Since the introduction of calving interval conditionality in 2025, the Scottish Government has been clear that the relevant calving interval threshold would likely reduce over time, including in the FAQ on SSBSS - Scottish-Suckler-Beef-Support-Scheme---FAQ---October-2026-4.pdf

The Committee may recall that, during evidence on the rural support plan I advised that adjudgments to the calving interval could be a minor change during the period of certainty between now and 2030.

The Scottish Government intends to strengthen the calving interval conditionality within the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS) by reducing the calving interval threshold from 410 days to 400 days in 2028 and 2029. This proposal is intended to support the scheme aims of directing support to efficient livestock producers, recognising the evidence is clear that higher calving intervals are linked to higher excess emissions.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

As the Committee will be aware, changes to the SSBSS are subject to legislation. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders prior to any legislative change and would be happy to keep the committee updated.

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™ We invest in people Silver
disability confident LEADER