



1. Animal Welfare Workshop

Title presentation

Development and implementation of an on-farm self-monitoring tool to promote welfare in dairy cows in northern Germany

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Abstract

Following the German Animal Welfare Act from 2014, livestock keepers in Germany are committed to gather and evaluate data regularly in order to monitor their animals' welfare. Since the legal basis doesn't present detailed implementations regarding the extent and method of monitoring, farmers are left alone finding a way to meet legal requirements. To challenge this problem the Operational Group "Tierwohl-Check" was initiated within the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) to develop a management tool assisting dairy farmers to meet their legal requirements and support their general herd management at the same time. A distinctive feature of EIP projects is their practical orientation. In order to create practical solutions, farmers are directly involved in the work process of the Operational Group. While various initiatives in the past years have developed a variety of reliable indicators to effectively monitor the welfare of dairy cows, "Tierwohl-Check" directly benefited from the outcomes of the projects "Q Check" (German Association for Performance and Quality Testing (DLQ), <https://q-check.org/>) and "EiKoTiGer" (Association for Technology and Structures in Agriculture (KTBL), <https://www.ktbl.de/themen/tierschutzindikatoren-milchrinder/>). The combination of the two sets of indicators ensures a maximum usage of the existing data from milk recording and cattle database and enables to describe the animal's welfare state by collecting on-farm data. Throughout the process, the existing indicators were checked for their usability in an on-farm self-monitoring application by all group members. Thus, it is possible to take into account the point of view on animal welfare from practical dairy farmers, research institutes and consulting organisations. All indicators were integrated in a web application, which is field-tested on different dairy farms in Schleswig-Holstein and will be developed throughout the project. The principal objective is to assist farmers with an easy-to-use application which provides reliable indicators, reveals weak points and therefore supports herd management. At the same time the evaluation can be used to meet the legal requirements to document animal welfare. Accompanying the development process, the project's aim is to develop and implement an e-learning program for farmers and to assist multipliers such as veterinarians, consultants and others by providing training material as a train-the-trainer approach. The "Tierwohl-Check" indicator set for on-farm self-monitoring of animal welfare in dairy cattle will be presented as well as an assessment framework regarding the welfare outcomes (target & threshold values, benchmarking).