



1. Animal Welfare Workshop

Title presentation

Practical plan and guidance for monitoring and managing animal welfare in Israeli dairy farms

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Abstract

Assessments of production animal's status in order to improve welfare in dairy farms are complex and subjective in nature, and therefore expensive, time consuming, and usually reflect animal's "state of mind & body" in a very limited time frame if at all.

Animal welfare tests can be justified and beneficial to farm animals, only if the following conditions are met:

- a. Some parameters which reflect on farm animal welfare status for at least one animal's population are proven to be reliably and objectively monitored.
- b. If those parameters are constantly monitored and their measurements performed by means which are regularly available on farm - demanding no extra work or costs.
- c. Scoring/ rating of each specific parameter is accurate and consistent enough when comparing two different inspectors/testers and in-between results of the same tests executed on farm.
- d. When there are optimal range, targets, or threshold values for each parameter, which can be used to express wellbeing and/or optimal welfare status in cow's population, that can be used as references/ goals in order to strive for improved welfare/ efficient advancement in animal's status.

The data automatically provided to most Israeli dairymen today such as: lying (time & bout), eating (time & bout), ruminating and panting, are valuable indications of an animal's welfare status, comparable with any other new data or interpretation seemingly doing so.

Therefore, we were determined to use this relative advantage of Israeli farms for creating an Israeli guideline for monitoring animal welfare on dairy herds. And by the way of doing this we designed a type of professional ethic code for dairy cow breeders in Israel and called it "Israeli purity of farms".



Development of a national welfare index applicable to the farm, requires a realistic assessment of animal groups routine welfare, housing and environment, nutrition, health, and biohazard status. It is important to sample on farm information, at least once a month to get a reliable up to date status. For that purpose, we created a new targeted module within Israeli cattle breeder association (ICBA) dairy management software. The relevant information is presented in two dedicated tables /reports of indices which can be easily extracted to understand cow group status and handle the groups when needed.

Healthy and relaxed animals, with no fear or stressful stimuli will be able to invest the most to ensure maximization of its production potential. Therefore, it is crucial to detect early signs of stress and hardship, to identify failures on dairy herd environment and herd management. On-farm animal welfare is assessed and rated by groupings such as the actual groups, age grouping, parity number or stage in milk. There is a sustainability advantage in fewer cows that produce more milk, on the other hand high yielding cows are more susceptible to disease and changes in the environment and therefore the strictness of their welfare is required to improve in order to maximize performance.