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A global survey of semen straw bar-coding practices and capabilities at bovine semen collection centers

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A global survey was conducted to assess straw bar-coding practices, capabilities, and potential hurdles to implementation at bovine semen collection centers (SCC). The survey was distributed to recognized members of ICAR and NAAB. Responses were received from 31 SCC representing 14 countries and ~162 million straws of annual production. Only 8 of the 31 SCC (26%) indicated bar-codes are presently in use representing Europe (5), China (2), and North America (1). The 128 bar-code format was consistent across SCC. Information contained in the bar code varied slightly by SCC. Most SCC included sire identity and collection date (n=7). ICAR code identifying physical/geographic location of semen collection was included by 4 SCC. One organization included a batch number in the barcode which requires connection to central database for interpretation. More than half of SCC (20/31) indicated their present straw printing equipment has the capacity to print bar codes. The perceived lack of demand or need in the industry was viewed as the primary hurdle to implementation by 51% (16/31) of SCC. To a lesser extent, equipment expense (n = 11) and computer programming (n = 10) were also viewed as hurdles to implementation. Sixty-eight percent of SCC (21/31) offer sex-sorted semen but varied in how conventional and sex-sorted were distinguished within sire: 10 SCC used an alpha numeric field, 8 use a separate NAAB marketing code, and 3 reported other methods. In summary, the present capacity for straw bar-coding exceeds the application and the primary obstacle to implementation appears to be the perceived lack of need, utility, and (or) user-friendly application at the farm level. Enhanced efforts at the farm level to facilitate cow-side data capture, transfer, and storage in on-farm record keeping systems are likely necessary to generate producer demand which will in-turn drive global bar-code application by SCC.

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