
Brief review of animal recording in Latvia

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Latvian animal recording started in 1904 when the first animal recording association was established. It expanded during 1910 to 1914 and eventually in 1914 there were 366 animal recording associations. On average, about twenty farms (approximately 230 cows) formed each association. Each association employed one milk recording assistant who visited every farm once a month and regularly registered yield, remaining feed, formulated feed ratios, trained milkers on how to milk cows, treat animals and what breeding stock to buy. Due to the not very efficient work of milk recording assistants, it was very expensive for farmers to afford. Only the richer ones could afford it.

Before World War II, 26% of cows were undergoing animal recording. During the Soviet Union period, the State completely financed recording and therefore by 1960, 55% of cows were being milk recorded and by 1969, this figure reached 87%. This continued until 1992 by which time State-owned cows were recorded and about 7% of privately owned cows.

When privatisation started, farmers had to pay for recording. The proportion of cows recorded rapidly diminished. Farm sizes went down to two to ten cows per herd and farms were disseminated geographically. This all meant that the previous system was destroyed and had to be re-established. Thankfully, due to State support, animal recording was kept alive.

If only 22% of all cows were recorded in 1993, then this figure rose to 37% in 1996.

During 1997, major restructuring reforms in the Ministry of Agriculture took place. As a result of State Ltd. "Latvian State Data Processing and Breeding Information Centre", the main tasks were the following:

1. Establishment and maintenance of animal and herd recording.
2. Summary and analysis of breeding animal information.

Presently 33% of Latvian cows are under milk recording, 30% run in “A” system and 70% in “B” system. Nine hundred milk recording assistants are registered in Latvia, 700 of which are on a part-time basis. Two independent milk laboratories were established in 1998, however, twelve laboratories in milk processing plants still continued to be used. New regulations for animal recording came into force in 1998. These regulations were elaborated according to ICAR.

The following are the budgetary plans for the next year (dotted lines in the flow chart attached are for the institutions to be implemented provided that State financial support is allocated):

1. To establish animal breeding inspection.
2. To decrease the amount of milk recording assistants and to equip the remaining with modern equipment (scales, milkoscopes, etc.).
3. To modernise local data processing centres and connect them to Internet.
4. To develop new animal recording software.

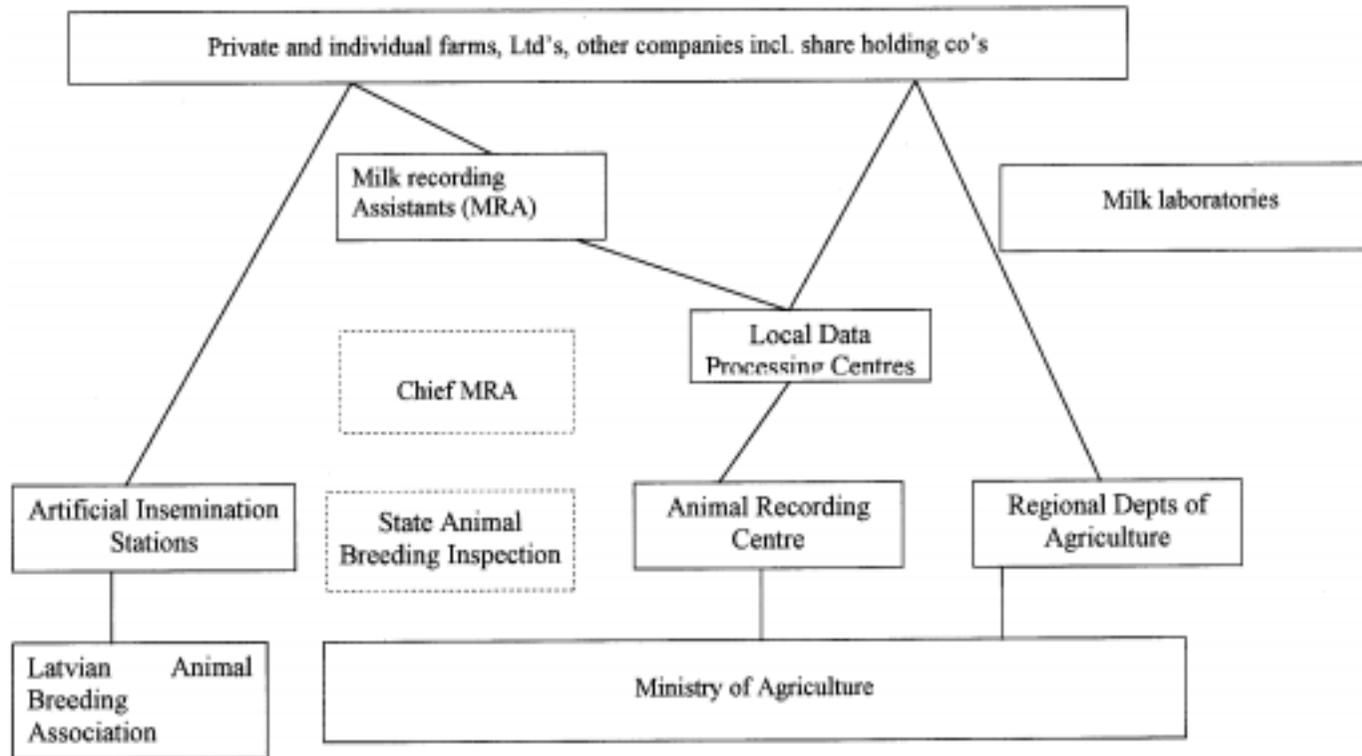


Figure 1. Latvian structures for animal recording.