

MEETING OF THE ICAR WORKING GROUP ON MILK RECORDING OF SHEEP

28th May 2002, Interlaken, Switzerland

Draft minutes

Presents : Franz-Joseph Romberg (Germany), Jean-Michel Astruc (France), Francis Barillet (France).

Mauro Fioretti (Italy) apologized not to attend the meeting, because he was working with the beef working group on the elaboration of the new guidelines on beef recording.

The meeting was held from 8.00 to 12.00 hours.

The draft agenda attached as annex 1 was adopted except the last point concerning dairy sheep farming in Macedonia, since Nikola Pacinovski could not attend the meeting.

1-Main activities of the working group during the last 2 years

The activities of the working group are fully described in the biennial report, which was presented in Interlaken in the plenary session. Nevertheless, the main points can be summarized as following :

- Reduce the size of the WG
 - 9 members from 7 countries
Jean-Michel ASTRUC (France)
Francis BARILLET (France)
Mauro FIORETTI (Italy)
Dunixi GABINA (Spain)
Elisha GOOTWINE (Israel)
Andrea MAVROGENIS (Cyprus)
Franz-Josef ROMBERG (Germany)
Sebastiano SANNA (Italy)
Eirene STEFANAKE (Greece)
- Update the guidelines for milk recording in sheep (communication in ICAR newsletter)
 - Formal revision of the guidelines, in accordance with the new statuses of ICAR
 - Introduction of method D in the guidelines (autumn 2001).
 - Preparation of the introduction of method E

- Implementation of the **biennial survey** to be presented at the 33rd Session of ICAR (2002) in Switzerland
 - Different items :
 - Milk recording
 - Pedigree information
 - Genetic evaluation
 - Breeding schemes
 - Milk recording equipments
 - Use of molecular genetics
- Co-operation with relevant SC and WG of ICAR
 - SC meters and jars : adapt the rules of small ruminants (and especially sheep) regarding the design, construction and performance of meters and jars, and the tests for provisional approval for milk meters for small ruminants.
 - WG on Milk Testing Laboratories : “passive” co-operation (standardization of analytical methods, harmonization and network).
- Contact with non ICAR organizations
 - CIHEAM (FAO-CIHEAM sub-network on animal resources in sheep and goats)
 - International Symposium on the milking of small ruminants

2-Method E in Germany

a / Some historical elements

In a first discussion with the WG in Veldhoven(the Netherlands) in 1996, the German delegation draw attention to the fact that, in some cases, German milk sheep breeders did not agree with parts of the International Regulations for Milk Recording in Sheep (in some cases, all the animals in the flocks are not recorded and/or suckling ewes are recorded). After a first description of the situation in 1997 by Germany, the working group proposed in Rotorua (New Zealand, 1998) the method E which was accepted by the ICAR Board. The intention is now to introduce this method in the guidelines. That’s why the group had demanded to Franz-Joseph Romberg to give a precise description of milk recording in Germany, in order to propose a new text in the guidelines.

b / The presentation of Franz-Joseph Romberg is attached as annex 2

b1) Background

-In Germany, milk recording is delegated to Milk Recording Organizations (MRO). There are 16 MRO in Germany, dealing with every species, which means that in each MRO, milk sheep activity is not important, compare to dairy cattle. The cost of milk recording is high (150 euros : year / cow). To get a lower price, dairy sheep breeders pay only the collection of information. The computation is made by sheep breeders associations.

-The breed used is East Friesian (“Ostfriesisches Milchschaaf”).

-The main *Länder* with dairy sheep farming are Lower Saxony, Bade-Württemberg and Bayern.

b2) Structure of the population of milk sheep in Germany (2001)

	# ewes	# flocks
Whole population	21,000	1,600
Flock-book population	5,000	400
Recorded lactations in 2001	1,856	151
Ewes with at least one lactation recorded (in 2001 or before 2001)	3,500	250

The 151 flocks with recorded lactations in 2001 correspond to 2 types of breeders

- about 10-15 “farm” breeders (some of them don’t belong to the flock-book)
- about 140 “hobby” breeders (flocks without milk production, whose aim is to maintain the breed with all the typical standard signs).

b3) Strategies of recording and strategies of weaning

Recording

The top part of the flock-book ewes is called “part A1” (they correspond to a part of the 5,000 ewes of the above table) and includes ewes with 2 parental generations and good scoring regarding the performance. The A1 ewes (belonging to the flock-book) have to be recorded at least at one lactation. The other ewes (not belonging to the flock-book) are not obliged to be recorded.

⇒ **It explains why some ewes are not recorded**

Weaning

Different weaning procedure may be applied in these flocks :

- Flocks without suckling period (only milking) (“farm” breeders)
- Flocks with milking after a suckling period of at most 8 weeks (“farm” breeders)
- Flocks with longer suckling period and recording during the suckling period (the “hobby” breeders, belonging for a large part to the herd-book population)

⇒ **It explains why some ewes are recorded during the suckling period**

b4) Method E

Method E should include ewes

- from flocks which don’t record all milking animals (the recorded ewes are called “designated ewes”) **and/or**

- which are recorded during the suckling period

E method is only applied in these cases.

E method is flexible (1 or 2 milkings ; official tester or breeder).

Nevertheless, we can propose the following framework of rules :

- At least all ewes belonging to the part A1 of the herdbook must be recorded.
- At least one lactation has to be recorded (normally the 2nd, but the 1st or the 3rd also may be recorded).
- Recording by an official tester (A) or by the breeder (B) is possible.

- At least milk yield, fat content and protein content are recorded.
- Normally the test-day includes 2 milkings, but alternate recording is allowed. Nevertheless, when the record occurs during the milking period, recording the 2 daily milkings is highly recommended for a better accuracy.
- At least 5 test-days per lactation, the interval being 30 or 42 days.
- First test-day occurs 15 to 30 days after lambing or weaning (maximum : 52 days for milking only and for recording during the suckling period, 91 days for milking after a suckling period).
- When recording during the suckling period, ewes and lambs have to be separated 12 hours before the test.
- Calculation of performance : 150-days-lactation is calculated (from lambing).
- EBVs : comparison with ewes recorded in the last 12 months (effects of parity and flock considered).

⇒ Proposition of redaction in the guidelines

Method E is a flexible official method applied when the breeding purpose is to maintain the breed with all the typical standard performance signs (flocks without milk production and/or flocks whose only a part of the ewes belongs to the herd-book). In the first case, the rule of not recording suckling ewes may be not respected. In the second case, the rules of recording all the animals of the flocks may be not respected.

b5) Nomenclature of the recording methods in dairy sheep

Moreover, we might take advantage of the introduction of method E in the guidelines to clarify and generalize the nomenclature of the recording procedures

All official method are built as following :

-first letter : recording method

That means : either who makes the recording ?

A = official tester

B = farmer

C = official tester (some of the test-days) and farmer (other test-days)

Or method E

-second letter (if it exists) : recording scheme

simplified method (T, C)

-figure : recording interval (between 2 test-days)

4, 5 or 6 weeks

D method is a non official method

List of the method according to the nomenclature

A4 B4 C4

A5 B5 C5

A6 B6 C6

AT BT CT

AC BC CC

E (E4, EC, ET)

D

3-Answers to proposals or questions made by some members of the working group about the guidelines

1. Point out differences between method B and D.(Dunixi Gabina)

We must effectively better explain the classification of the methods. The discussion about method E and its introduction in the guidelines should give us the opportunity to clarify the different recording procedures.

2. Methods AT and AC : add BC and BT (Elisha Gootwine)

Actually, we will generalize as in cattle :

AT and AC if official tester

BT and BC if farmer

CT and CC if part of the test-days by an official tester, and part by the farmer

3. Clarify terms for total milk yield (Elisha Gootwine)

As proposed by Elisha, we should adopt the following terminology :

TMY (total milk yield) for lactations with milking from lambing.

TMM (total milked milk) for lactations with milking only after a suckling period.

4. Reproduction : add “open day-time from lambing to conception” (Elisha Gootwine)

It will be added

5. Minimum daily milk yield : there are different assumptions depending on the parts of the guidelines. Has to be clarified (Franz-Joseph Romberg)

We propose to harmonize as following : the minimum daily milk yield in dairy sheep is 200 ml or 200 g

6. Definition of Fleischmann method (Franz-Joseph Romberg)

The term of Fleischmann is not used in the part of the guidelines concerning cattle. The term used is interpolation method. At the moment, we propose to continue to use the term of Fleischmann. Nevertheless, it could be interesting to better describe how to calculate the lactation, particularly in case of a suckling period (see § perspectives)

4-Perspectives concerning the working group

1. We must update the guidelines

a. introducing the method E

b. taking into account the suggestions of the members of the group (see above paragraph)

2. It seems to be interesting to continue to carry out the biennial survey. Indeed, in addition to have a regular state of the situation, it is a way to stimulate the new developments emphasized by the group and follow their implementation.
3. The attempt to get milk yield of the different populations in the survey has underlined the heterogeneity between countries in the expression of milk performance. Countries compute and publish either a total lactation (Total Milk Yield) or a lactation at the milking only period (Total Milked Milk), combined with the possibility to compute the lactation on a reference period or not. With a purpose of harmonization between countries, it should be interesting to promote (without imposing it) a reference milking trait. The first action could be to gather (from the countries which would like to participate) the different ways of calculation of a lactation using the Fleischmann method.