

MEETING OF THE ICAR WORKING GROUP ON PERFORMANCE RECORDING OF DAIRY SHEEP

29th May 2012, Elm room, Cork, Ireland

Draft minutes

Attendants : Berte Asmussen (Denmark), Jean-Michel Astruc (France), Zdravko Barač (Croatia), Francis Barillet (France), Antonello Carta (Italy), Mauro Fioretti (Italy), Marija Klopčič (Slovenia), Sotero Salaris (Italy), Alessia Tondo (Italy).

5 members of the WG attended the meeting. In addition, the meeting hosted Marija Klopčič (who represented Drago Kompan), Mauro Fioretti (as former member of the WG), Sotero Salaris (from Agris Sardinia) and Berte Asmussen (from Raw Milk Connect).

The meeting was held from 8.30 to 12.00.

The agenda (see below) was adopted.

Agenda

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We discussed 2 years ago the opportunity to have a joint meeting with the goats working group. Given the importance of the agenda of the goats working group this year, 2 separate meetings were maintained in Cork. We will state whether it is relevant or not to have a joint meeting in Berlin in 2014.

1-New name of the WG and constitution of the WG

The new name of the WG has been agreed by the Board in 2011: the WG on “Milk Recording in Sheep” has become the WG on “Performance Recording in Dairy Sheep”. This change is to take into account the inclusion of udder morphology in the guidelines.

There has been no change in the constitution of the WG over the last two years.

The working group includes 8 members from 6 countries:

Jean-Michel ASTRUC (France)
Zdravko BARAĆ (Croatia)
Francis BARILLET (France)
Antonello CARTA (Italy)
Elisha GOOTWINE (Israel)
Drago KOMPAN (Slovenia)
Franz-Josef ROMBERG (Germany)
Alessia TONDO (Italy)
Eva UGARTE (Spain)

In addition, like any other SCs and WGs, a board member has been nominated as “watching briefs” over the activities of the group. Clara Diaz (Spain) has been appointed for this mission in the WG on performance recording in dairy sheep.

2-Main activities of the group over the last 2 years

The following activities have been carried out over the last 2 years.

21-Report of the activities of the WG and communications

A synthesis of the situation of the working group was done for the ICAR Board to be presented in Bourg-en-Bresse session in France in June 2011. The chairman of the group attended the meeting of the ICAR Board with chairpersons on 21st June 2011 and presented a synthesis of the works on-progress.

22-On-line enquiry

Preparation of the Cork session: remind the countries to fill in the questionnaire, analyze and synthesize the data, elaborate tables and figures to be inserted into slides.

See below §3

23-Co-operation with other bodies of ICAR

-Jean-Michel Astruc attended the meeting of the WG on goats in Bourg-en-Bresse in June 2011.

-Regarding the issue of the requirements of milk recording devices for sheep, our wish to not relax the requirements to keep enough accuracy for each individual measures seems to be agreed within ICAR, since no other demand of clarification arose from any ICAR body.

24-Co-operation with non-ICAR organizations

-Participation of Jean-Michel Astruc and Antonello Carta to a core group on sheep and goats within the FABRE-TP (Farm Animal Breeding and Reproduction Technology Platform). FABRE-TP is a European Technology Platform whose purpose is to produce documents for Strategic Research Agenda. The deliverables were (i) a presentation of the work by Joanne Connington in Stavanger (EAAP), (ii) a general brochure available on the web (<http://www.fabretp.info/>).

According to Francis Barillet, the text on sheep and goats appears a bit pessimistic and there is a risk to discourage EU to fund projects on sheep and goats. Antonello Carta and Jean-Michel Astruc confirm that the purpose was not to be pessimistic but to stress the needs to help this sector whose interest is high: small ruminants often utilize marginal areas not suitable for other forms of agricultural production; sheep and goats often provide the main source of income for rural populations.

25-Preparation of the emendations of the guidelines

The group had many exchanges about the 2 on-progress emendations: recording of udder morphology and quality assurance for AC method and produces a text to be studied during the meeting.

See below §5 & §6

3-Presentation of the results of the sheep enquiry on-line and discussion

The data from the on-line enquiry have been valorized and are presented through different slides (with tables and figures).

At the time of the meeting, 13 countries had submitted data: Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

The slides presented and discussed during the meeting concern the following topics:

- recorded population (by countries and by countries/breeds)
- methods and recording intervals with a focus on simplification of milk recording (quantitative and qualitative recording)
- breeding schemes and selection criteria
- milk yield: type of lactation calculation and results for some populations
- milk recording equipment
- molecular information
- recording of other traits

A attempt to highlight the evolution of milk recording since 1988, year of the first survey organized for the Oslo session, is done for the first time this year. 4 slides shows the evolution of milk recording in France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovenia, Czech Rep., Croatia, Slovak Rep., as well as in the main French, Italian and Spanish breeds.

The different slides will be available on the ICAR website in the space dedicated to the working group.

The raw data (from 2010 and 2011) are published in a brochure prepared by the ICAR secretariat and distributed during the Cork session.

Both the brochure and the slides from the WG are two complementary documents which can be useful for anybody.

Some key features: official milk recording represents on the whole 1,319,267 ewes. D recording, which is a non-official and “free-of-rules” milk recording, is described only in France and represents 544,967 ewes on the whole.

The 5 top countries in terms of number of recorded ewes are: Italy (477,736), Spain (402,088), France (300,473; 845,440 with D recording), Greece (92,360) and Portugal (20,926).

The 5 top breeds are: Sarda (239,519), Lacaune (170,408; 679,390 with D recording), Valle del Belice (161,775), Manchega (117,654), Spanish Assaf (100,944).

4-Add milk quality in the enquiry

The group was asked (demand from Alfredo Martin de la Rosa from Ministry of Agriculture in Spain) to add data in the survey about protein and fat content.

These data were not yet included because fat and protein collected from milk recording often came from samples collected in simplified design (samples in the morning, only some parities sampled) and thus were not representative of the ewes recorded or the economic results.

The group agrees with this demand and proposes to enlarge the data to the following ones:

- fat
- protein
- somatic cell count
- lactose

Given the problem of the representativeness of the sampling in simplified designs, for each component, the data may be produced for:

- the recording flocks, based on individual data
- all flocks, based on bulk milk (from payment data)
- recording flocks, based on bulk milk (from payment data)

One, two or the three modalities may be produced.

A proposition of a new table will be proposed to the ICAR secretariat, in the aim to get data next year.

5-Guidelines: quality assurance for AC method

Following discussions in Niagara Falls about difficulties to implement AC recording in some situations in Sardinia, the group worked to give a generalized response to the problem.

The problems occur mainly in the following situations:

- Flocks that have a part of the ewes which are registered and another part non registered.
- Flocks where a part of the ewes are milked once a day whereas the other part is milked twice.

Let's note that a third situation was firstly described, corresponding to preferential treatments, but during the meeting, we decided not to mention it because we have no solution for such a problem.

After many exchanges over the last two years, a document was proposed before the meeting and discussed during the meeting.

The proposal is to introduce in the guidelines as a §2.2.2.7 paragraph named "quality assurance for AC method" (an introduction will globalize to all simplified methods concerned) whose purpose is to describe a procedure both (either) to control and (or) elaborate an alternative AC coefficient: introducing (not mandatory ... up to each organization to decide the relevance of its implementation) one monthly record at the 2 milkings per flock-year in order to check the quality of the simplified design in the flock. This approach should, in case of AC method, also permit to obtain a flock coefficient (average of individual coefficients) to be directly applied to all test dates. Such a proposal is based on a work presented by the Sardinian colleagues at the meeting and available on the ICAR website.

The text of the §2.2.2.7 was discussed during the meeting. The proposition distributed prior the meeting and the proposition resulting from the discussions during the meeting are joined to these minutes.

The main discussions and conclusions proposed during the meeting were the following:

-Decision: the problem concerns not only AC method but also AT method and therefore must be globalized to all simplified methods.

-Decision: before setting up the procedure of quality assurance, which is costly, it must be suggested to the breeder that he separate the ewes not registered or milked once a day. This is the more appropriate response. Only in case of the breeder does not apply this suggestion, might the procedure be set up.

-Decision: in the case of some ewes are milked once a day and in the situation where the breeder does not want to separate the ewes, it is necessary to know which individual ewes are milked once and which are milked twice.

-Decision: in the case where an AC coefficient is obtained through the quality assurance procedure at one test-day, it is important to check that in the given breed, the coefficient is stable enough over the test-day, in order to avoid a bias. It is the case in the trial proposed in the Sarda breed whose lactation curve is quite flat, but it might not be the case in other breed. In this respect, it is demanded to Sotero Salaris to check the contemporary coefficients.

-Decision: setting up the assurance procedure is optional and in any case is not mandatory. It should be considered as a possibility when the situation requires it.

-Decision: the quality assurance concerns only milk yield and not samples.

6-Guidelines: udder morphology

The purpose is to propose different udder appraisal tables with udder morphological traits. The objective is to be informative and not normative.

As for the previous point, after many exchanges over the last two years, a document was proposed before the meeting and discussed during the meeting.

The methodology to make the guidelines evolve is to insert a paragraph in the §2.2.3 “ICAR guidelines for optional records”. A §2.2.3.2 named “Recording of udder morphology” should be inserted between “Qualitative tests” (§2.2.3.1) and “Other types of testing” (§2.2.3.3)

The guidelines are based on current tables used in Sarda, Churra and Lacaune breed and include 5 traits scored: teat position, udder depth, udder attachment, udder cleft, teat size.

These traits and tables may be updated for other situations (other breeds and/or other countries) or if the described tables evolve.

The emendations of the guidelines are joined to these minutes.

7-Miscellaneous

Properly addressing the issue of the automated milk recording

In an e-mail in date of 17 May 2012, Elisha Gootwine raised the issue of the automated milk recording. Several companies (SCR, Afimilk and others) distributes devices and systems that automatically daily collect milk record, validate the records, store the records and performs calculations for milk quantity and quality. With these daily records, the companies control the whole process through electronic devices and the program they supply.

From the discussions, it is acted that:

- the problem of the accuracy of the systems is taken into account in the section 13 of the guidelines for on-line milk analysis. In this section, the requirements related to lactation calculation (sub-section 13.14, in relation with the WG lactation calculation) and the requirements related to recording data (sub-section 13.15, in relation with the WG animal recording data) are both under development. The proposition is to get in touch with the work done in these groups.

- Nevertheless, Elisha’s question should be more explained.