Recording of claw and foot disorders in dairy cattle: current role and prospects of the international harmonization initiative of ICAR


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ICAR Technical Meeting,
Krakow, Poland
Overview

- Introduction
- Survey on recording of foot and claw disorders
- Status of genetic evaluation for claw health
- International harmonization of foot and claw disorders
- ICAR Claw Health Atlas
- Conclusions
Introduction

• Foot and claw disorders - animal welfare issue

• Foot and claw disorders – high economic importance (up to 450 Euro per lame cow and year)

• High percentages of lame cows or cows with claw disorder (70% Van der Waaij et al. (2005); 36% Rouha-Mülleder et al. (2009))

• For effective breeding - data from claw trimmers important

• Challenge in genomic selection – sufficient phenotypes and genotypes of novel traits for calibration

• Harmonization within and across countries needed!
Initiative of ICAR WGFT

- Survey of ICAR WGFT 2012 – big interest on feet and leg problems
- ICAR WGFT with claw health experts – Berlin 5/2014
- ICAR Survey on claw health recording - Aug/Sept 2014
- ICAR WGFT with claw health experts - Vienna 10/2014
- 6 Online-Meetings and many emails for elaboration
- Finalization - May 2015: „ICAR Claw Health Atlas“
Results of survey
Participation

• Topic „Claw health and feet and leg disorder recording“
• Online questionnaire: August - September 2014
• Overall response rate: 60% (53 ICAR member countries)
  – 22 replies from 18 countries to the survey directly
  – partial information from further 14 countries
    (information by email)
• Who answered?
Researchers, scientists, claw experts, representatives
from performance and/or breeding organisations,
veterinarians
Results of survey

Content of survey

- Standardized key, which disorders are recorded, grading systems, quantitatively most important disorders,..
- Documentation and recording (logistics, coverage, who,...)
- Central data storage
- Formation and training of claw trimmers
- Promotion programs,..

Intention to get an idea and overview about the current situation in different countries
Results of survey
Harmonized key of claw disorders by country

- 10 countries with harmonized single key of claw disorders (Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom)
- Harmonization across the Nordic countries (Nordic Claw Atlas, 2013)
Results of survey

Which disorders are recorded?

- White line disease: 12
- Toe ulcer: 12
- Sole ulcer: 12
- Sole hemorrhage: 10
- Scissor claws: 8
- Rusterh. ulcer: 4
- Overgrown claws (simple horn overgrowth): 4
- Laminitis: 4
- Lameness: 5
- Interdigital phlegmon (foot rot): 12
- Interdigital hyperplasia (corns): 12
- Interdigital dermatitis: 7
- Horny pillar: 1
- Hock lesions: 5
- Heel horn erosion: 9
- Double sole: 9
- Digital dermatitis (Mortellaro disease): 12
- Dermatitis: 4
- Coronary digital phlegmon: 3
- Corkscrew claws: 8
- Chronic laminitis: 8

Number of countries
Results of survey
Disorders and details of recording

• Number of diagnoses:
  – 6 to 20 claw disorders + up to 10 foot and leg conditions
  – big regional differences

• Details of recording:
  – 2 countries on cow level
  – 9 countries on cow leg level
  – 4 countries per single claw

• Severity grading (numeric/descriptive):
  – 7 countries – yes for all disorders
  – 5 countries – yes for certain disorders
  – 2 countries – no disorders
Results of survey
Main source of information

- Claw trimmers main source in most countries, veterinarians intervene in severe cases
- Most countries: 40 to 60% done by professional claw trimmers (Austria, Canada, Germany, Italy, Netherland, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom)
- Finland and France: 60-80% by professionals
- Denmark, Israel and Spain: 80-100% by professionals
- New Zealand and Australia: cows are on pasture most of the year - claw trimming is not standard practice
Results of survey
Education and training of claw trimmers

- In most countries people are allowed to work as a trimmer - with or without education
- Trimmers are licensed and/or certified (e.g. Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Norway)
- Claw trimmers are provided with either special education programs or training by claw trimmer experts or professionals (e.g. Canada, Denmark, Finland, Israel, Spain, The Netherlands or United Kingdom)
- Some countries organize regular training sessions, or undertake other measures to ensure comparability of the results between the different hoof trimmers (e.g. Charfeddine, 2014; Van Pelt, 2015).
### Results of survey

**Recording practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard form with reference to the key for claw health recording on herd management system</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard form with reference to the key for claw health recording on mobile device</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard form with reference to the key for claw health recording on paper sheet</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual free text notes (no standardized form) on herd management system</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual free text notes (no standardized form) mobile device</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual free text notes (no standardized form) on paper sheet</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA / no information available</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* It is assumed that a rather large portion of the claw trimmings are not documented at all.
Results of survey
Central data storage

- **Use for benchmarking and breeding**: data need to be centrally available
- **Electronic documentation systems** for claw disorders
  - data are partly provided for research
  - but data transfer to a central data base - not common standard
- **Standard practice in countries with routine genetic evaluation**
  - Nordic countries
  - The Netherlands
Status of genetic evaluation for claw health

• Routine genetic evaluations for claw health:
  – The Netherlands since 2010
  – Denmark, Sweden and Finland since 2010; since 2014 genomic breeding value for claw health within 10,000 genotyped cows with phenotypes (NAV, 2014)
  – Norway since 2014
  – Spain and France: infrastructure to capture claw trimming data (25-30% of cows)
  – Other countries: data from commercial dairy farms for genetic research projects (e.g. Canada, Germany)
  – Many activities and projects are under way

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International harmonization of foot and claw disorders

- Emphasis/projects on recording of foot and claw disorders observed in many countries
- A broad range of recording practices and documentation schemes exists
- ICAR WGFT invited internationally recognized claw experts to collaborate
- Fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration among experts from different backgrounds (claw health experts, hoof trimmers, bovine practitioners, geneticists)
International harmonization of foot and claw disorders

- focusing solely on the standardization and harmonization of data recording
- designed to provide a universal tool for claw trimmers and practitioners
- resulted into harmonized descriptions of 27 different lesions
- Descriptive trait definitions are used to ensure accurate classifications
- AIM: support the collection of comparable and high-quality data within and across countries (e.g., genetic evaluation purposes; interventions to improve claw health on farms)
ICAR CLAW HEALTH ATLAS
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# Overview of Foot and Claw Disorders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Synonymous Terms</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swelling of coronet and/or bulb</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Uni- or bilateral swelling of tissue above horn capsule, which may be caused by different conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Ulceration of the sole area specified according to localization (zones) such as bulb ulcer, sole ulcer, toe ulcer, toe necrosis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole ulcer</td>
<td>SU</td>
<td>Penetration through the sole horn exposing fresh or necrotic corium</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulb ulcer</td>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Ulcer located at the bulb</td>
<td>Heel ulcer</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toe ulcer</td>
<td>TU</td>
<td>Ulcer located at the toe</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toe necrosis</td>
<td>TN</td>
<td>Necrosis of the tip of the toe with involvement of bone tissue</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin sole</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Sole horn yields (feels spongy) when finger pressure is applied</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White line disease</td>
<td>WL</td>
<td>Separation of the white line with or without purulent exudation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White line fissure</td>
<td>WLF</td>
<td>Separation of the white line which remains after balancing both soles</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White line abscess</td>
<td>WLA</td>
<td>Necro-purulent inflammation of the corium</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sole ulcer (SU)

Penetration through the sole horn exposing fresh or necrotic corium
ICAR Claw Health Atlas
(Egger-Danner et al. 2015)

- International harmonized descriptions of foot and claw disorders available for the first time
- Publically available for download at ICAR webpage
- Promotion of ICAR Claw Health Atlas
- Versions in other languages will be available: translated text need to be provided
- Access to a printable high quality version will be provided by ICAR
Conclusions

• Focus on foot and claw health increasing (farm economy aspects, animal welfare,).

• Claw trimming data are important for genetic improvement of claw health

• Challenge: enough phenotypes for genomic selection of these novel traits - international cooperation!

• International harmonized descriptions of foot and claw disorders major step forward – implementation needed!

• We can do better when we work together (multidisciplinary, multi-country approaches) – ICAR Claw Health Atlas – example of fruitful cooperation!
Acknowledgement

- The ICAR Working Group on Functional Traits acknowledges the excellent cooperation with the international experts on claw health and expresses its gratitude for their support and proposals for the elaboration of new standards for the recording of claw health information.
- Without their expertise and their great support it would have been impossible to succeed with the ambitious plans of making available this new ICAR Claw Health Atlas.

The ICAR Claw Health Atlas is found: https://www.icar.org/Documents/ICAR_Claw_Health_Atlas.pdf
Thank you for your attention!