

Abstract by Antonello Carta - Relationships between somatic cell count and milk yield in the Sarda dairy sheep breed.

In dairy sheep, Somatic Cell Count (SCC) in bulk milk has been used as an indicator of hygiene, animal welfare and prevalence of sub-clinical mastitis. SCC is also included in the parameters considered for the determination of the milk price. SCC individual recording has been implemented in several European sheep to detect sub-clinical mastitis and for selection purposes. In Sardinia a Regional Plan aimed at improving animal welfare and using as target the reduction of bulk milk SCC was launched. Simultaneously, a simplified recording system of individual value of SCC was applied in the selected population to evaluate the potential introduction as selection criterion. In this situation, it is crucial to assess the relationships between SCC and production traits. This work showed that raw relationships between somatic cell count and milk yield, even if negligible, are negative only in animals with high probability to have an infected udder.