

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – APRIL 2016 NEWSLETTER

The next *ProAction* element is Animal Care and Livestock Traceability. Implementation/Validation begins in 2017. All farms must be compliant by September 1, 2017. This is regardless of your individual date of validation. In general the Animal Care section deals with welfare and animal handling.

In a recent volume of the Journal of Dairy Science there is an article titled “Imagining the Ideal Dairy Farm”. The respondents were American but the “study” was largely done by the University of British Columbia. To quote the article “*the aim of the study was to assess the views of people not affiliated with the dairy industry on what they perceive to be the ideal dairy farm and their associated reasons*”. Following is the open ended question “*What do you consider to be the ideal dairy farm and why are these characteristics important to you?*” There were 500 people surveyed. As you can imagine there were responses stating that the ideal farm would be small, family run, organic, fed only grass and were antibiotic and hormone free. Not exactly feasible in our climate. A&W would love this!

How do you think this would be answered by friends and family here?

Aside from the previous responses there were some general themes that are important to note. These related entirely to welfare and ethics. 90% of respondents *referred to the animal in some capacity and their concerns focused largely on animal welfare and argued that cows inherently deserve to be provided a good quality of life*. The authors believe that these insights provided by the respondents in this study indicate that providing assurance that animals are well cared for will improve the acceptability of dairy farming to people who are not affiliated with the dairy industry.

Certainly not all endorsed a hormone/antibiotic free scenario on farms and were willing to accept that the use of antibiotics was acceptable when necessary.

At a recent symposium in Ottawa Dr. Dave Kelton reported on work done within the Dairy Research Charter entitled “*The National Dairy Study 2015*” – *Funded by the Dairy Research Cluster*. In this report 1000 stakeholders were asked their thoughts on needs assessment within the Canadian Dairy Industry related to management. Included were producers, government, and industry which included veterinarians and nutritionists. It was asked to rank the top 5 priorities on farm related to management. Results follow:

Producers

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Animal Welfare	Reproductive Health	Cost of Disease	Cow death-longevity	Udder Health

Government

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Animal Welfare	Antibiotic Use	Reproductive Health	Biosecurity	Food Safety

Industry

1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Animal Welfare	Lameness	Antibiotic Use	Biosecurity	Cost of Disease

No real surprise that animal welfare was number one on all 3 lists. It is certainly the topic of discussion in most animal production groups – cattle, pork and poultry. Just listen to and read the ads from various food retailers and restaurants.

The same group was asked about needs assessment related to disease and in all 3 groups the top priority was lameness. From this date a questionnaire was created to send out to all licensed dairy producers in Canada – 11,962. There were 1,342 respondents. The result of the questionnaire and 371 farm visits showed that lameness on farm was 25% in freestalls and 35% in tie stalls. The ProActive goal is 10%.

Hock scoring was also measured and found to be 20% of cows had hock scores of 2-3. These hocks are those with scabs, swelling or open wounds. The ProActive target is <10%. This latter study illustrates that our Canadian farms have work to do in order to improve welfare related signs as evidenced by lameness and hock scoring. It also shows how important animal welfare and lameness are to our stakeholders. The previous study shows that the consumer is looking at welfare very critically and want cows to be treated responsibly.

The next step in ProAction would seem to be addressing both groups as we move toward improving animal care and welfare.