

Claw and Limb Health as Part of the Veterinary Herd Controlling System

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Introduction

The Veterinary Herd Controlling System (VHC-System) is a pyramidal, dynamic quality assurance system for dairy farms. It allows optimization of process and product related quality. Individual farm goals are pursued through farm-specific strategies and target to performance comparison. Number and intensity of implemented measures are derived from careful evaluation of results of a preliminary status quo determination. The individual control areas are staffed with direct (directly related to animal health) and indirect (related to factors affecting animal health) control points and corresponding indicators. The indicators are quantitative or semi quantitative criteria allowing to set goals and to evaluate a herd or a group of animals. Claw and limb health represent one of the mentioned control areas.

Materials and Methods

By means of a search of international literature a quantity of direct (directly related to animal health) and indirect (related to factors affecting animal health) critical control points (CCP) and control points (CP) and their corresponding indicators was collected. The indicators are quantitative or semi quantitative criteria allowing evaluation of a herd or a group of animals and to set goals. Suitable CCPs and CPs were implemented in a flow chart system to be used by veterinarians as a tool for the status quo assessment as the first step as well as for regularly performed procedures. In case that the indicators of control points run out of range the deviat-

ing results lead to the next step of the VHC Pyramid of Intensity starting further investigation or/and some action of improvement.

Results

Regarding the control area "Claw and Limb Health" Locomotion Scoring, Assessment of Claw Status, Hock Evaluation and Determination of the Stall Standing Index are named as the best choice of direct critical control points, which can be measured regularly and without major effort. If corresponding indicators deviate from the normal range, the VHC-System provides further, logical steps to isolate the reasons for variations and to countermand them. These include control of lying places and walkways (factor Housing), control of claw trimming and housing management (factor Management), control of micronutrients and laminitis-predisposing feeding factors (factor Feeding) and comparison of genetic aspects of relevance to claw and limb health of sire and cow (factor Genetics).

Significance

The described QAS, designed as a flow chart as part of the VHC-System, represents an efficient tool to control "Claw and Limb Health" on dairy farms. It is based on the results published in the international scientific literature. During the 2nd part of the project the components of the QAS will be implemented into the dairy production process. True effectiveness as an early warning QAS working as a Controlling System will be determined and an economical evaluation will be done.