ICAR Claw Health Atla: one year of implementation

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Claw and foot disorders causing lameness are gaining in interest worldwide. Their importance for the whole cattle sector and their role in animal welfare have motivated worldwide engagement for effective breeding for improved claw health which requires trait definitions that are comparable between countries. Therefore, in 2014 the ICAR Working Group on Functional Traits (ICAR WGFT) started interdisciplinary collaborative work involving international claw health experts, which resulted in the publication of the ICAR Claw Health Atlas in June 2015. The descriptions in the Atlas provide a universal tool for claw trimmers and practitioners for accurate classifications of claw disorders. The current focus is the implementation of harmonized claw data recording in national programs. This included translating the Atlas to multiple languages and raising awareness of stakeholders, as well as providing support if needed. The presentation will give an overview about the status of implementation with its challenges and highlight further planned developments and activities.

The impact of claw health and lameness on fertility in Austrian dairy herds

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The Austrian cattle breeding associations were searching for efficient dairy cows, which produce milk, calve without complications every year and can be fed with farm grown foodstuff. To find those cows data was collected from 170 breeding herds consisting of 5,500 dairy cows. The first step included the evaluation of farm specific factors, including animal husbandry, feeding, claw trimming practice and management. At every milk yield recording event, which was performed 8 to 11 times during the year of 2014, BCS, lameness scoring, body weight and body measures were evaluated. The ration was analysed and documented, animal health and claw trimming data was collected during the observation period. The project gathered data from different sources; milk and fertility data from animal recording, additional documented data as mentioned at every milk sampling event, claw health data from claw trimming events and animal health data from the veterinarians. Data on claw health and lameness was used to evaluate the impact on fertility. Lameness groups were created, according to the data on lameness scoring, to be able to compare cows that have never been lame, to cows that were slightly, moderately or severely lame. Fertility parameters used in this study were calving interval, days open, non-return rate, insemination rate, first service conception rate. Non-lame Fleckvieh cows were 97 days open on average compared to chronically lame cows which were 113 days open. Calving interval in non-lame Holstein cows was 392 days compared to 425 days in severely lame cows. First service conception rate was 50% for all non-lame cows, whereas first service was successful in 35.4% in moderately lame cows. A significant increase in days open, prolonged calving intervals and decrease of the first service conception rate was observed for cows detected as lame when compared with those considered non-lame.