

MANAGING LAMENES

A Step Towards the Future

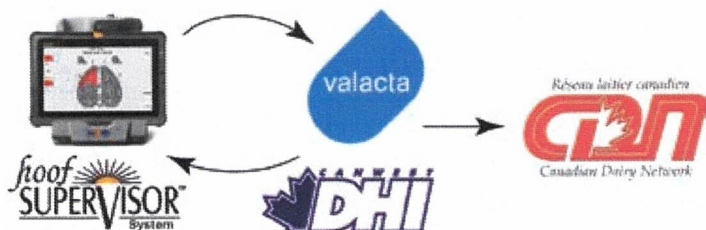
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Over the past few years, dairy producers better understand the importance of lameness. The economic losses associated with lameness are undeniable. It is estimated that hoof lesions cost on average \$450 per cow. Data collection has determined that 46% of cows have at least one hoof lesion. With this high prevalence, it is easy to understand that for a 100 cow herd, this can represent

financial losses in the magnitude of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per year. We estimate the losses to the Canadian dairy industry to be over \$125 million dollars yearly. This finding has led many stakeholders to take action and acquire tools to improve the situation.



In 2014, a major research project called 'Improving hoof health in Canadian dairy herds' was born. This project was led by Dr. Filippo Miglior of Canadian Dairy Network and the University of Guelph and funded by the Dairy Research Cluster 2. It allowed the implementation of specific objectives to achieve an improvement of the situation, but especially a collection of national data on hoof injuries.

In the same period, a group of dynamic hoof trimmers and industry stakeholders had the idea of forming an association of hoof trimmers. Taking advantage of this wave of enthusiasm, several trimmers received an advanced three-day training on hoof trimming and lesion identification. This training also included elements of biosecurity and animal handling. This was the beginning of the Quebec Hoof Trimmers Association.

The same trimmers received a second training on the proper use of a computer and Hoof Supervisor software. This software is used on the farm at the time as trimming, to collect data on observed lesions. An interface between monthly milk tests and the Hoof Supervisor allowed trimmers to download certain

milk test information directly into the Hoof Supervisor before a herd visit. For example, it was easy to make reports or graphs related to the types of lesions, the stage of lactation or the number of parity. This same software is already in use in Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and New Brunswick since 2012. For the project mentioned earlier, it allowed for the collection of standardization hoof lesion data by trimmers all across Canada.

More specifically, this data collection allows the trimmer to leave a report directly to the farmer. This report indicates the actual types of lesions that are present on-farm. The Hoof Supervisor produces several management reports that support the work of trimmers and other dairy professionals to help find solutions to the lameness problem. Conversations between hoof trimmers, veterinarians, and other industry professionals can therefore be based on actual farm statistics.

Since forming, the members of the Hoof Trimmers Association meet regularly for ongoing training and constructive sharing of ideas.

The data collected by the trimmers are then sent to the dairy milk testing company (Valacta) and then to the Canadian dairy network with the consent of the producers. Centralizing this data collection was the second goal of the hoof health improvement project in Canadian dairy herds.

This pipeline of data collection, ranging from milk testers to milk control, to the CDN has enabled the establishment of genetic evaluation of hoof health. Recently, for the Holstein breed, it is possible to see a new evaluation of Hoof Health on bull proofs. This new evaluation is based on the eight most frequent lesions. Although the heritability of these lesions is low (less than 9%), this overall hoof health index can be an interesting tool for improving lameness problems. The introduction of genetic evaluation was the third objective of the Canadian project.

The fourth objective of the project is the production of a new herd management reports by milk testing company for hoof health. This report, which will be available shortly, will allow herds to benchmark themselves in relation to other herds.

A lot of work has been done in recent years concerning lameness. The dream of some trimmers to have an association, the desire of some veterinarians to improve the situation of lameness is becoming more and more concrete through the implementation of these types of projects and work tools.

For many years, reproductive and udder health data have been well documented, and producers are aware of their importance. In the field of lameness, everything was started from the ground up. With the data collected from the trimmers, a big step in the right direction has been made. The future for lameness management is promising ...