



COW COMFORT ON DAIRY FARMS ACROSS CANADA

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

- A team of Canadian researchers and their students visited 240 farms in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta between January 2010 and August 2012. They evaluated the comfort of cows in tie-stall farms, free-stall farms and farms with robotic milking.
- The tool developed for evaluating comfort includes measurements on lactating cows and measurements on the stalls and other facilities as well as herd management issues. At the end of the visit, a report on the farm's strengths and weaknesses in light of the requirements and recommendations from the CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND HANDLING OF DAIRY CATTLE – 2009 was presented to and discussed with the producer.
- Our results from the on-farm measurements taken indicate that our producers are doing well for some measurements and need to improve others.
- Producers appreciated the On-farm Cow Comfort Evaluation Tool. A follow-up study showed that over 70% of the producers visited in Quebec and Ontario made changes further to the discussion of the report that we had presented to them on their farm's results.
- Our results indicate that a large part of the requirements and recommendations from the Code of Practice are applied on the farm. However, our dairy farms are showing problems with lameness and with hock, knee and neck injuries. These problems can be reduced through low-cost, easy-to-implement measures.
- Our preliminary results suggest that, like productivity and reproduction, the variables associated with welfare (mainly lameness and injuries) are related to the longevity of tie-stall cows, estimated by the percentage of cows in their third lactation or more. However, the analysis shows that the factors associated with longevity vary greatly between Quebec and Ontario.