



Photo: Anna Bieber

Young stock and cows benefit from natural feeding systems

ProYoungStock



Photo: Silvia Ivemeyer

Aim of the project:

To collect, to develop and to assess natural feeding strategies increasing dairy livestock welfare.

Main activities:

- ▶ Identifying innovative young stock rearing systems that allow calf-cow contact implemented by pioneer farmers across Europe
- ▶ Evaluating the impact of these systems on cow and calf welfare and economic performance
- ▶ Testing the hypothesis that contents of immunoglobulins in colostrum and in milk might be stimulated either due to cow-calf contact or due to feed supplements
- ▶ Studying the effect of increased milk amounts fed to organic dairy calves in terms of welfare, natural behaviour and performance
- ▶ Assessing long-term effects of different environmental and feeding conditions during rearing on health, longevity and fertility later in life
- ▶ Evaluating the potential of plant bioactive compounds in pasture-based production systems to improve protein use efficiency, animal health, and immune response (natural anthelmintic) as well as product quality
- ▶ Sharing project results with farmers, advisors, and other stakeholders through workshops and leaflets, guidelines, practice abstracts, articles, websites and scientific publications

Background

Early separation of dairy cows and calves after birth is an animal welfare issue. It is practiced on most dairy farms, also organic ones. The (long-term) effects of natural rearing and feeding strategies on health, welfare and economic performance need further investigation in order to solve current problems and to find best practises.

Introduction

The objectives of ProYoungStock are to collect, to develop and to assess natural feeding strategies increasing dairy livestock welfare including health in different agro-ecological and regulatory European contexts. This will be achieved by improving the rearing of calves pre-weaning and designing forage based feeding strategies for heifers and adult cows, both fostering the animal's immune status and reducing the use of antibiotics and anthelmintics.



Photo: Anet Spengler Neff



Societal and long term benefits

The current project will close the research gaps regarding natural calf rearing and feeding systems by also focussing on feeding strategies for young stock. Different young stock rearing practices will be evaluated concerning their effect on health and longevity in adult cows. Optimised grazing and feeding systems are important for many organic farms in extensive grassland areas in Europe. Natural, locally available herbal bioactive feed compounds will be tested and better known as a result of this project. Recommendations from this project will help to reduce the use of antibiotics and anthelmintics as well as concentrates while maintaining adequate production levels. Dam rearing systems will be promoted contributing to better animal welfare and taking account of a major consumer wish.

How to reach target groups

Farmers, advisors, and other stakeholders will benefit from the results of this project through diverse dissemination activities such as workshops and leaflets, guidelines, practice abstracts, articles, websites and scientific publications.



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Further information

This transnational project is funded via the ERA-net CORE Organic Cofund based on funds from participating countries and funding from the European Union.

CORE Organic Cofund is a collaboration between 26 partners in 19 countries/ regions on initiating transnational research projects in the area of organic food and farming. CORE Organic Cofund has initiated 12 research projects. Read more at the CORE Organic Cofund website: <http://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/>

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