

Cattle Physical Exam Spanish-Language Training CD for Dairy Workers
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Abstract

The tremendous increase in the U.S. Hispanic population and the associated expansion of the Spanish language has profound implications for dairy operation management and cattle husbandry. A stall-side, interactive, Spanish CD can enable the proper diagnosis and treatment of dairy cattle in the face of a language barrier that is increasing with time.

Within the entire U.S., nearly eighty percent of Hispanics speak Spanish at home with two-fifths of the Mexican American population (the largest minority group in the U.S.) not speaking it very well (Suarez & Ramirez, 1999; Hispanic Population Census, 2001). Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in Colorado almost doubled from 424,000 to 736,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Of those farm workers in the Midwest and other western regions of the United States, ninety percent are reported to be Hispanic, with most being young, foreign-born, and Spanish-speaking (Von Essen and McCurdy, 1998). In addition, only three percent of the 1,125,000 farm operators or managers overseeing these workers are of Hispanic ethnicity (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

Such numbers highlight the potential for a huge communication gap within farm management. In this project, we are concerned with bridging such a gap between the managers and workers on dairy farms with the aim of improving diagnosis of dairy cattle. Traditionally, the best option for managers/owners is to choose a few workers that have a combination of attributes that will enable them to act as a liaison between the managers and farm workers in addition to training their fellow workers in Spanish. An abbreviated list of the favorable attributes might be: literacy and fluency in both Spanish and English, a stout work ethic, an ability to work well with cattle, an ability to work well with others, and the ability to retain and apply information well. Such individuals are hard to find. On top of feeding, milking, and mending the cattle, dairy workers are the eyes and ears for herd health. They spend the most time with the cattle and, thus, are the best sentinel for catching common problems such as mastitis, ketosis, displaced abomasums, metritis, diarrhea, etc. With good training, they are also able to treat appropriately or seek appropriate veterinary assistance without losing valuable time.

To mitigate communication and knowledge gaps among dairy workers and their managers/veterinarians, we aim to create an interactive, Spanish CD on the proper physical examination and diagnosis of dairy cattle. In such a format, it will be available to dairy workers at any location and time on the dairy, through a laptop or desktop computer. With the CD, dairy workers can be trained to properly examine, diagnose, and, in some cases, treat dairy cattle in their own language and at their own pace.

By gathering photos and video on a 3,000-cow dairy farm, we followed the physical exam format delineated by Dr. Van Metre of Colorado State University. Created in Dreamweaver, the CD presents a thorough physical exam with photos and links to relevant diagnoses and disease information at each step of the examination. We focused on six major ailments affecting dairy cattle not mentioned through other ILM projects at CSU: displaced abomasum, metritis, mastitis, ketosis, diarrhea, and pneumonia. The completed dairy worker edition will have audible rumen “pings” and succution, and possibly healthy and unhealthy heart sounds. We may develop it toward a more thorough CD that will be used in veterinary colleges and among veterinarians in both English and Spanish.

The need for an interactive, stall-side, Spanish CD is central to effective management and health of dairy cattle on large-scale dairy operations. With this CD, we hope to bridge a communication gap, thereby improving the health and efficiency of dairy cattle and the operations on which they live.

References

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