



Developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) to benefit dairy farms

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Collaborating Partners: Nina von Keyserlingk, Katelyn Mills, Katie Koralesky

Total Project Funding: \$27,960

Contribution from DIREC: \$6,930

Objectives:

- The objective of this study was to assist in the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for colostrum management and newborn calf care. This was done through three on farm visits.
- For the first meeting, we visited dairy producers to discuss how SOPs are currently used on farm. For the second meeting, we helped farmers develop a new or modified SOP and set a goal for using the SOP.
- For the third meeting, we returned to the farm to discuss the utility of the new SOP and assess whether they achieved their goal or not.
- Our final objective was to share information about SOP templates, tips for writing SOPs, and project results with the dairy industry.

Activity Description:

- May-June 2018: Recruited dairy farms with the help from Mainland Young Milk Producers, BC Holstein News, CanWest Dairy Herd Improvement (DHI), and veterinary clinics.
- July-October 2018: Conducted first and second meetings with producers.
- October-December 2018: Conducted third and final meeting with producers.
- January 2019-April 2019: Data analysis and preparation of study results.
- Activity 5

Results:

- Data analysis is ongoing, but at this time we can share some preliminary results.
- Each farm in this study had different practices and goals for managing newborn calves, and therefore selected different SOP styles (e.g. decision trees, picture based) to meet their goals.
- At visit 3, we discovered that some farms utilized the modified SOP developed in farm visit 2, but others did not. This indicates that the context of farms is important and should be considered for similar projects.
- Some farms chose to involve their veterinarian in the development of the SOP. The addition of this trusted advisor had a beneficial impact for some farms and not for others.

Benefits & Analysis:

- The standard template distributed for a SOP was not perceived as useful by farmers or utilized on farm to help meet farm goals (e.g. successful passive transfer).
- Employee accountability was seen as an important component of SOP utility. Things such as employee checklists or calf cards aided in the goal of accountability.
- Further concerns emerged from farmers regarding employee training, employee recruitment and retainment. These areas of concerns for farmers such be explored further in future studies.
- As an additional benefit, researchers Katie Mills and Katie Koralesky presented information about this project in BC Holstein News (Volume 40, number 4 Christmas 2018) and at WCDS 2019.

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DIREC Mission Statement:

The BC Dairy Association actively funds research and education projects. Our objective is to facilitate, encourage and financially support projects and programs that have been identified by the BCDA to benefit the BC dairy industry.

