

# Dairy Cow Longevity in Alberta

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Over 100 dairy farms are currently participating in The Alberta Dairy Hoof Health Project by sharing trim records and DHI data. To date, in this project funded by Alberta Milk and coordinated by UCVM and Alberta Milk, records have been accumulated on over 25,000 cows and we will continue to collect data until the end of 2012. Since its inception, we have wanted to expand the project to include assessment of on-farm factors that affect cow longevity, hoof lesions and lameness, such as stall design, flooring and other housing characteristics and management practices. UCVM has joined a Canada-wide collaboration, initiated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, BC. With financial support from Dairy Farmers of Canada and the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency, we are now able to proceed with that part of the project. Dr. Laura Solano, a graduate student along with a small team of technicians and students, will be making 2 visits to each of the 100 Alberta dairy farms collecting information. A standardized questionnaire will be used with questions about management practices, the gait will be scored in a sample of the adult herd, and accelerometers will be deployed that measure standing and lying time. Additionally, stalls, flooring and other aspects of housing will be evaluated.

**Implications:** The ultimate goal will be to develop an advisory tool that can improve technology transfer to help advisors and producers to improve cow comfort and longevity and reduce the incidence of lameness on Alberta dairy farms.