

# Comfort and longevity in Quebec dairy operation

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All producers are proud of their cows. All of them are doing their best in providing the best care they can in order to achieve the desired milk production thereby more profit. But where do you think the increase in profit from those cows is going to come from in the next years? Genetics? Better feeding programs? Guess again. We will investigate if Cow Comfort is the answer. Keeping cows longer in the herd means more money in the dairy producer's pocket. This study is all about trying to link longevity and cow comfort in tie stalls herds. We will investigate which factors contribute to cows living longer in a herd. We selected herds for high and low longevity. We defined longevity using a combination of percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> lactation cows or higher and turnover rate. Using this selection criteria, and in coordination with Valacta (Dairy Production Centre of Expertise for Quebec-Atlantics), 60 Holstein herds with at least 40 lactating cows and a minimum of 7,000 kg/cow/year have been selected throughout Quebec. On farm measurements include: lying time, injuries, height and width at the hook bone, as well as measures of housing conditions and management e.g. stall dimensions and cleanliness. So far, we are still in the data verifying phase of the study. The data analysis is set to begin early 2012.

This study is part of a Canada wide project. Ninety tie stall farms in total will be visited in Quebec and Ontario. The project will also cover other housing systems (free-stalls and automatic milking systems). A total of 240 farms will be visited in Canada.

**Implications:** Identify the link between cow comfort and longevity to keep producing mature cows longer in the herds therefore bringing more income to dairy farmers.