

The Impact of Lameness on Economics of Dairy Farms

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Lameness is ranked as the third most important factor influencing economic returns in the dairy industry as well as the third most common cause for involuntary culling of lactating cows. Costs of lameness are related to costs of treatment and prevention (e.g. foot baths), as well as reduced longevity, milk production, and reproductive performance. Even if lameness is not the primary culling reason, it is often the indirect reason for culling because lameness makes cows more susceptible to reproductive failure and mastitis, and lameness reduces milk production. This emphasizes the negative impact of lameness on the productivity of a dairy farm.

Due to the effects of lameness on factors negatively influencing the economics of dairy farms, a reduction of the lameness prevalence is seen as an essential factor to increase the productivity of dairy farms. To understand the impact better, an economic cost-benefit analysis of preventive practices and occurrence of lameness needs to be done.

Calculating cost-benefits with local and applicable values gives Alberta farmers the opportunity to improve the productivity of their dairy farms because a cost-benefit analysis can provide producers with insights in return on investments in tackling lameness.

This project aims to evaluate how much farmers can invest in lameness prevention to have cost benefits in the end. From the outcome of this study, farmers will profit in the long term as once the preventive practices are applied the lameness problem will decrease and the economic outcome will increase.