Farmers’ perceptions; broaching animal welfare topics on farm

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Background

• Welfare issues such as lameness and hock injuries affect on average between one quarter to one half of cows on dairy (NDS, 2018; Croyle TBD, von Keyserlingk et al., 2012)

• Veterinarians swear an oath to protect animal health and welfare, and to relieve and prevent suffering (AVMA; Bones & Yeates, 2012)

• Farmers in Canada were preparing for their mandatory nationwide animal welfare assessment

• There are no in-depth studies exploring dairy producers’ perceptions on being approached with an animal welfare issue on their farm

Methods

Qualitative research methods were applied via focus groups to understand social phenomena of dairy farmers in a natural discussion; emphasis was on the meaning experiences, and views of dairy farmers

Rigor was incorporated by utilizing systematic thematic analysis

Results

6 Major themes for farmers* receiving animal welfare advice

Conclusion

• Farmers not only want, but expect veterinarians to both identify and inform them of animal welfare issues on farm

• Veterinarians need to be clear about their achievability of farmers’ expectations

• When trying to resolve animal welfare issues on farm, it may be most useful to relay the message through already established relationships on farm

* A total of 5 focus groups (n=36 dairy farmers) from distinct regions of Ontario Canada. Farmers had similar median milk production, median herd size, and median age for Ontario dairy farmers

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