PLAY BEHAVIOUR AS AN INDICATOR OF WELFARE

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Background

Play behaviour is suggested as an indicator of good welfare
Tool for researchers to assess welfare

3 studies:
• Pain
• Rearing substrates
• Stocking density

Objective:
To evaluate the effects of pain on play behaviour

Treatments
• Control
• DB
• DB + LA + NSAID

10 min arena test

Mintline et al. 2013, Applied Animal Behaviour Science

Effects of pain

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The practice of using river stones for calf rearing is increasing

Farmers perception:
• Increased hygiene and reduced health issues
• Thermal properties
• Cost effective

Effect of rearing substrate

Objective:
Evaluate rearing substrate on play behaviour in the home pen

Compared 2 bedding materials at 2 age groups
• Sawdust and River stones
• 1 week and 6 weeks of age

Play behaviour recorded continuously for 10h in the home pen

Sutherland et al. 2013, Applied Animal Behaviour Science
Effect of space allowance & rearing substrate

Objective:
Evaluate rearing substrate and space allowance on play in an arena test

- Sawdust and River stones
- 1, 1.5 and 2 m² per calf
- 3 and 6 weeks of age

Summary
- Play decreased in response to pain
- On river stones, play decreased in the home pen but increased in the arena test
- Play increased with small space allowances
Conclusions

• Play can be used to measure welfare in dairy calves
• Arena tests offer a promising tool for measuring play

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