



Feeding Behaviour Identifies Dairy Cows at Risk for Metritis

Background:

- Metritis is a common disease after calving in dairy cattle
- Reduced feed intake by cattle in the days before calving is well documented
- It is unclear whether changes in feeding behaviour can be used in the early detection of metritis



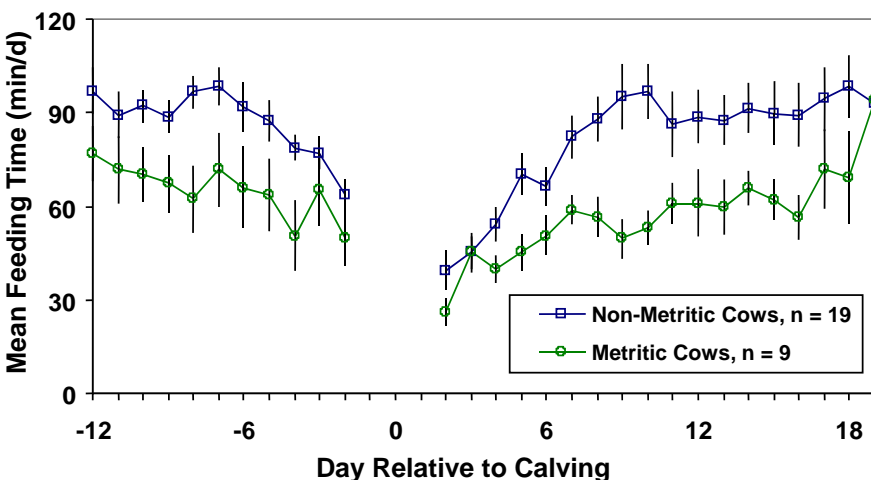
Objective: To determine if feeding behaviour can be used to predict metritis in dairy cows

Methodology:

- Feeding behaviour was monitored from 12 days before until 19 days after calving, excluding the 3 days around calving
- Holstein heifers ($n=6$) and cows ($n=20$, parity= 1.6 ± 0.7) were fitted with passive transponders to provide automatic monitoring of cow presence at the feed alley*
- Metritis was diagnosed by rectal body temperature (measured daily) and examination of vaginal discharge (measured every 3 to 5 days)

Results:

Figure 1. Daily feeding activity of cows in transition (mean±SE)



- 69% of animals demonstrated some symptoms of metritis
- Metric animals spent 24 minutes/day less time feeding than non-metric animals (Fig. 1; $P<0.01$)
- Odds of being diagnosed with metritis increased by 2.56 times with every 10-minute decrease in feeding time

Conclusion: Feeding behaviour both before and after calving identifies dairy cows at risk for metritis