Changes in standing behaviour identify cows at risk for digital and interdigital dermatitis

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The Problem
Dairy cows housed in freestall barns have a high prevalence of claw disease, especially in the first few months after calving

The Objective
To determine whether standing behaviour during transition could identify cows at risk for digital and interdigital dermatitis after calving

Methodology
Daily standing time and number of standing bouts of multiparous Holstein dairy cows (n=46) were monitored for 2 wks pre- to 2 wks post-calving

Cows with no injuries 2 wks pre-calving and clinical signs of dermatitis at 3 or 7 wks post-calving (n=11)

Cows with no visible injuries over the study (n=11)

Results
Cows that developed dermatitis spent more time standing and had fewer standing bouts during the period around calving compared to healthy cows

The difference in standing bouts is especially clear on the days around calving

Implications
Changes in standing behaviour during transition, particularly in the days around calving, can identify cows at risk for digital and interdigital dermatitis. Early identification of cows most at risk for dermatitis may help improve treatment and prevention.

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