Dairy Summary
Extract from Alternative Approaches to Livestock Health Survey Report
January 2022
Overview of the Use of CAM among Dairy Farmers

From May 2020 till January 2021 Whole Health Agriculture (WHAg) surveyed 221 livestock farmers who use at least one Complementary and Alternative Medicine/Method (CAM) in their livestock health management. The survey was developed in collaboration with, and piloted by, a group of commercial farmers, 4 dairy, 1 sheep, 1 mixed (beef and poultry) farmer. The responses of 70 commercial dairy farmers who completed the survey are reported in this overview. The minimum unit size per respondent is 10 cows (milkers) and the maximum is 900. (Median number of milking cows per farmer = 150.)
Results of Using CAMs

Health and antibiotic usage

"I was able to take a different perspective on health and a deeper understanding of the importance of a healthy environment."

67% of dairy farmers experienced lower disease frequency/reduced severity of disease.

"It has heightened my confidence to take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of my stock."

90% of dairy farmers experienced improved herd health & wellbeing.

69% of dairy farmers stated zero, low or reduced antibiotic usage.

54% of dairy farmers noted less frequent/severe mastitis.

+ 52% lower cell counts.

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Dairy Summary
Results of Using CAMs

Productivity, Costs & Profitability

- **69%** of dairy farmers stated fewer cases of milk withdrawal.
- **52%** of dairy farmers reported increased financial profitability of the farm.
- **71%** of dairy farmers noted lower vet and medicine costs.

“\[quote\] I rarely need to use tubes any more.\[quote\]”
Results on the Use of CAMs: Dairy Farmers

This question was based on markers that farmers are requested to report, and/or consider to be important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Description</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved general health and wellbeing of livestock</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower vet and medicine costs</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero, low or reduced antibiotic usage</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer incidences of milk withdrawal</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower disease frequency and/or reduced severity of disease</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced frequency or severity of mastitis</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower cell counts</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased financial profitability of farm</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher fertility rate</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced frequency or severity of lameness</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower cull rate/re-stocking rate</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero, low or reduced wormer usage</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher live birth rate</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calves come back stronger following homeopathic treatment. Having seen the results, the staff are now willing to bring protocols for treating mastitis into the parlour.
Summary of the Use of CAMs among Dairy Farmers

As an industry, dairy farmers are under unique pressure in relation to antibiotic usage. Many milk suppliers (themselves under pressure from their buyers) are setting ambitiously low usage targets, and some organic milk buyers are making Produced Without Antibiotics (PWAB) a requirement of membership.

‘Antibiotic-free’ is becoming a buzz word among conscious consumers where the dairy industry is also being squeezed by the rise of ‘healthier’ plant-based alternatives.

For the dairy farmer wanting to make changes, without compromising welfare, there is insufficient information, support or training offering effective alternative health solutions. There is clearly a gap between demand and what is available to health-conscious farmers.

Based on global health needs, dairy industry trends, and the result of this survey, WHAg strongly recommends that the potential for CAM-led approaches to dairy cow and calf health are further investigated and documented. Furthermore, that dairy farmers seeking alternatives are better supported, particularly by industry bodies.

Our milk buyer has asked the whole supplier group to work towards zero use of critical antibiotics and reduced use of them generally. Apparently this is due to the increased questioning coming from their buyers
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