

BEHAVIOUR OF DAIRY COWS IN DIFFERENT HOUSING SYSTEMS

Enriketa Monstvilienė, Bronius Bakutis
Lietuvos veterinarijos akademija
Lithuanian Veterinary Academy
Tilžės g.18, LT-3022 Kaunas
Tel. 36 32 08; faks. 36 32 08; el. paštas: zoohig@lva.lt

Summary. Not long ago the main objective of studies of animal husbandry buildings and housing technologies was the development of an intensive farm with confinement buildings. However, recently more and more attention has been paid to animal health and welfare. Therefore the interest in open housing systems designed to assure optimal environmental conditions for animals and to provide a possibility to behave in a more natural way has been growing with a great extent. The goal of our work was the comparison of behaviour of dairy cows' kept in different conditions during winter stay period. After evaluation of peculiarities of dairy cows' behaviour it was established that feeding and keeping regime at cow-houses of different designs influenced cows' behaviour. Cows at loose housing could get to feeding paths freely and eat as much as they wanted. But in a group of cows some certain hierarchy existed, because animals of a lower rank had to wait until stronger ones would eat. Cows at tied barns had a possibility to eat together at the same time. At cow-houses with light constructions a bigger number of cows rested in cubicles at night than in the daytime. In the daytime cows could move more, thus having a possibility to behave in a more natural way. At the tied barn the duration of rest at night and in the daytime differed slightly. Summarizing the data of cows' behaviour observation we can affirm that dairy cows' housing system has influence on the level of animal welfare.

Keywords: housing technologies, cows behaviour, loose cowshed, tied cowshed, animals welfare.