FIRST STEP™: An Interactive Tool for Investigating Herd Lameness Problems

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First Step™ is a new interactive tool designed to assist dairy herds with lameness problems. A tutorial package provides background information and training on a range of lameness related topics, and the database is used to store and summarize data collected from a farm in a series of reports that can be used to develop a herd specific action plan.

**Step 1.** Visit farm and collect information using the First Step™ data capture forms.

**Step 2.** Load data into the First Step™ database (using tutorial to learn about each component):
1. Locomotion score and lameness cost analysis
2. Lesion types and frequency
3. Hoof-trimming program
4. Footbath program
5. Heifer transition
6. Nutrition and feeding practices
7. Stall design
8. Heat stress abatement strategies
9. Ventilation
10. Walking surfaces
11. Time budget constraints

**Step 3.** Run the series of herd summary reports for each problem area.

**Step 4.** Use the reports to determine:
1. The degree of lameness and cost of problem
2. The predominant lesion types
3. Adequacy of hoof trimming
4. Efficacy of the footbath program
5. Changes in management at calving time
6. Risk factors for ruminal acidosis
7. Ease of stall use
8. Effect of heat stress and poor ventilation
9. Risk of hoof trauma from poor walking surfaces
10. Constraints on time budgets and lying time

**Step 5.** Determine the key problem areas which need to be addressed (Table 1) and develop an action plan for the herd focused on 1 or 2 major problem areas.

**Table 1.** Comparison of risk factors for claw horn lesions and infectious lesions.

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<tr>
<th>Claw Horn Lesions</th>
<th>Infectious Lesions</th>
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<td>Leg Hygiene</td>
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<td>Heat abatement</td>
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