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Human-animal relationships in the Norwegian dairy goat industry: assessment of pain and provision of veterinary treatment (Part II)

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Abstract

Stockpeoples' ability to recognise pain in their livestock, and to respond appropriately, is of utmost importance for animal welfare. Assessment of pain is complex, and attitudes and empathy are thought to play a role in peoples' responses to the sight of pain. In a separate paper we investigated the dimensionality of Norwegian dairy goat stockpeoples' goat-oriented attitudes and empathy. This paper investigates how the stockpeople assess and manage pain and disease in goats. The interrelationships between pain perception and provision of veterinary attention were explored, as well as how these two measures are associated with demographics, attitudes and empathy. Pain assessment scores for individual conditions ranged across most of the picture-based pain assessment scale. Dystocia, gangrenous mastitis and the neurological form of caprine arthritis encephalitis were considered most painful. Linear regression showed that one attitude dimension was positively associated with mean pain assessment score (mPAS), while growing up on a goat farm, having farming as main income and having seen a large number of the conditions revealed two distinct groups of stockpeople. Logistic regression showed that females, older stockpeople and stockpeople who grew up in a rural district were significantly more likely to be in the group that more frequently contacted veterinary surgeons. We conclude that training of stockpeople needs to focus on evaluation and management of pain to ensure a high standard of animal welfare.

Keywords: animal welfare, dairy goats, human-animal relationships, pain assessment, pain management, veterinary treatment