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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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Human–Animal Interactions in Dairy Goats

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Tuesday, 1st August - 15:30: Poster presentations in oral format (Grande Hall) - Poster

***Dr. Francesca Carnovale¹, Mr. Giovanni Marcone¹, Dr. Francesco Serrapica², Prof. David Arney¹,
Prof. Carmela Barone², Prof. Giuseppe De Rosa²***

*1. Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Sciences, Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tartu, Estonia, 2. Dipartimento di
Agraria, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II*

It is widely assumed that the quality of human–animal interactions may have strong impacts on animals' living conditions and is fundamental to animal welfare. This work aims to evaluate the effectiveness of methods for assessing and monitoring the welfare of lactating goats. In particular, the methods regarding the assessment of the human-animal relationship. The experimental protocol included three tests and observations in the milking parlour, namely: avoidance distance in the pen, avoidance distance at the manger, approach test within 2 minutes and behavioural observations of stockmen and animals during milking. Fourteen dairy goat farms located in Potenza (Southern Italy) with lactating goats ranging from 67 to 450 were used. All farms raised the Rossa Mediterranean goat breed. The percentage of goats that permitted touching at the manger (mean $\pm$ SD: 12.36 $\pm$ 9.50) was higher than found in the pen (9.67 $\pm$ 11.86), and within 2 minutes inside the pen (8.19 $\pm$ 13.78). The avoidance distance at the manger (0.63 $\pm$ 0.28) was lower than that in the pen (1.19 $\pm$ 0.58). Avoidance distance at the manger was positively correlated with that in the pen (Spearman correlation test (r_s) = 0.607; p < 0.01), as was the percentage of goats touched at the manger and in the pen (r_s = 0.647; p < 0.01). Approximately 60% of the stockmen interactions observed during milking were neutral (decisive tone, hand contact and light strokes with the stick, little use of force and short sounds), while the positive (speaking calmly and patting) and negative (screaming loudly, hitting animals and striking with a stick with force, kicking) interactions had similar values, approximately 20%. The number of neutral stockmen interactions was positively correlated with the percentage of goats moving away when approached at a distance >1 m (r_s = 0.799; p < 0.001) and negatively correlated with animals touched at the manger (r_s = -0.607; p < 0.05), in the pen (r_s = -0.613; p < 0.05) and within 2 minutes (r_s = -0.669; p < 0.01). Regarding the degree of association between the behaviour of the milker and the animals during the milking routine, the percentage of neutral interactions tended to be positively correlated only with the number of kicks performed by the animals (r_s = 0.476; p < 0.10). It is concluded that avoidance distance at the manger and in the pen animals, are valid tests to evaluate the human-animal relationship in goats. In addition, avoidance distance at the manger may reliably replace the test performed in the pen.