Comparison of animal judging at show-ring and at farm-shed: preliminary results on Holstein cows

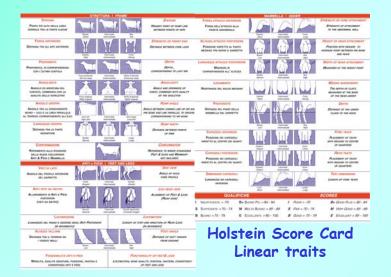


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Background

The morphological evaluation of cattle could be performed analytically at farm level, by mean of detailed score card (20 traits examined by breed classifiers) using linear description to be used in genetic index, but also at livestock exhibitions during which the best animals present in each of the 15 provided classes are awarded.



Results

As general rule,
in the show-ring
cows were classified according to
the more detailed score obtained at farm-shed.
But sometime this did not occurred,
as in the provincial show for
the 2 year senior, 3 year senior
and 4 year cows,
and in the regional show for
the 2 years junior, 2 years senior
and 3 years senior cows.
It should be pointed out also that
going from younger to older age classes,

the official scores of the cows are rising

(from 84-85 to 90 -91).

Aim

To test the correspondence of the classification in the exhibition with the final scores obtained at the stable.

Material and methods

The trial was conducted on about 200 Italian Holstein cows attending different shows in different age classes (7 classes: from less than 30 months to more than 6 years of age).

Discussion

Differences can occur because
for the show-ring the cows are prepared
in order to enhance and bring out
their best morphological traits
and conceal defects.

So animals with low scores in the stable can be placed in higher positions than those with high scores, as at farm cows are evaluated as they are, while at show cows appear at the best, or because they are in top form, thanks to fitting

or because their weak points and defect are hidden (by foot care, washing, clipping, brushing, etc.), or conversely

(not optimal conditions, wrong milking time, limping or problems arising in transport, etc.).

Conclusion

There is a substantial difference
between the two judging techniques,
and even if the results achieved
are often in agreement,
the future of animal judging is in the experts,
who should use the same criteria
and assessed the animals taking in account
all rules learned during their training.