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## **A training programme to ensure high repeatability of injury scoring of dairy cows**

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### **Abstract**

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*Obtaining reliable welfare outcome measures from commercial farms can be challenging. We developed a training programme to train observers to score injuries of the tarsal joint, carpal joint and neck on dairy cows as part of an on-farm study. Twelve trainees were trained using protocols and photographs in a classroom session and on-farm visits. Continued repeatability checking was carried out during a refresher and mid-way assessment. Two trainers were used as the reference standard to which all trainees were compared. The study demonstrated that methods of scoring tarsal joint, carpal joint and neck injury can be learned by trainees from different backgrounds and high repeatability can be achieved and maintained at a very large regional or national level. Successful learning of injury scoring is dependent on protocols with strong definitions and photographs as well as repetitive training sessions. Additionally, continued repeatability checks are essential to ensure the reference standard continues to be met. This training programme can be used as a model to successfully train on-farm assessors.*

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**Keywords:** *animal welfare, dairy cattle, injury, inter-observer reliability, training, welfare assessment*