



UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

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Media Release

From the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW)

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For Immediate Release:

Animal welfare researchers in Israel break new ground

Animal welfare scientists at the Koret School of Veterinary Medicine of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have been investigating the potential of a novel method of assessing the welfare of dairy cows that could provide early indications of health and welfare problems, so facilitating more timely and effective interventions.

In a paper published recently in the Journal of Dairy Science (October 2013, Volume 96:6506-13. doi: 10.3168/jds.2013-6941) Roi Mandel and the research team at the Koret School describe how they have investigated the cows' changing patterns of use of automated scratching brushes, devices that are increasingly provided in dairy farms for the animals' benefit, as behavioural indicators of stress and discomfort, correlating usage with the cows' own feeling of well-being. The hypothesis, which appears to be supported by the results of the research so far, is that if a cow is beginning to feel unwell this will show in reduced brush use – data that can be automatically collected by the brushing device, and call forth further investigation. The hope is that serious conditions such as mastitis could be detected earlier, leading to more effective intervention. Further research is to be undertaken to assess the sensitivity of the method and the correlations between brush usage and specific conditions.

Roi Mandel's research, supervised by Dr Eyal Klement of the Koret School and by Dr Becky Whay and Professor Christine Nicol of the University of Bristol, UK, is supported by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) – a UK based charity which has a special fund to help the development of animal welfare science in Israel. "We are delighted that this research project could lead to significant advances in dairy cow welfare, not only in Israel but around the world," said UFAW Chief Executive and Scientific Director Dr James Kirkwood. "We look forward to further results from this work and to other successful projects in Israel."

If you would like to know more about UFAW's animal welfare in Israel fund or would like to help support the fund's work contact UFAW, The Old School, Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8AN. Telephone 01582 831818, email ufaw@ufaw.org.uk or visit www.ufaw.org.uk/ufaw-sawi.

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(Photo attached) Dairy cow using an automated scratching brush. Photo courtesy Yochi Zwilling

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Chief Executive and Scientific Director: James K Kirkwood OBE BVSc PhD CBiol FSB MRCVS

Secretary: Jane Moorman

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Note to Editors:

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

UFAW improves animal welfare worldwide through its programme of awards, grants and scholarships; by educational initiatives, especially at university and college level; by providing information in books, videos, reports and in its scientific journal *Animal Welfare*; by providing expert advice to governments and others, including for legislation and 'best practice' guidelines and codes; and by working with animal keepers, scientists, vets, lawyers and all those who care about animals.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors.

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