Survey of nutritional recommendations and management practices adopted by nutritionists of dairy cattle in Brazil: Properties profile and reproductive management

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This study conducted at UNESP, Dracena campus, was designed to describe the nutritional recommendations and management practices adopted by dairy cattle nutritionists in Brazil. The 43 nutritionists, responsible for dairy farms throughout Brazil, who agreed to participate in this survey were contacted by e-mail or telephone and received preliminary instructions about participating in the survey. In a subsequent e-mail message, instructions were provided on how to access the survey, and each participant was assigned an identification number. The participants were guaranteed anonymity and asked to complete the survey as quickly as possible. All 43 consultants completed the survey within 1 month. This survey consisted of 77 questions, which were available online through the Web-based survey tool (http://www.surveymonkey.com) during one month. After this one-month period, all data were tabulated in an Excel Spreadsheet, and the number of responses, mean, minimum value, maximum value, and mode were calculated for all questions. When asked about the average numbers of cows in the dairy farms they serviced, 48.8% (n = 21) of the nutritionists had clients that feed less than 100 cows, whereas 44.2% (n = 19) participants had clients ranging from 100 to 300 cows. Three respondents (7.0%) assisted only dairy farms with a capacity of more than 300 cows. With respect to the average daily production of milk in the dairy farms assisted by the nutritionists interviewed, 47.6% (n = 20) of the nutritionists had clients that produce less than 1,000 liters, whereas 27.9% (n = 12) had clients ranging from 1,001 to 3,000 liters. 11 respondents (25.6%) assisted only farms that produce more than 3,000 liters of milk daily. Moreover, when asked about the number of daily milking, most part of the nutritionists (n = 36; 83.72%) responded twice. Also, nutritionists reported that 67.2% of the dairy farms assisted by them receive bonus for the quality of the milk. Furthermore, 31.6% (n = 12) of the nutritionists interviewed reported that the somatic cell count was the main criteria used to pay bonus to their clients, 26.3% (n = 10) responded total bacterial count, as well as other 26.3% (n = 10) responded percentage of crude protein. Only six participants (15.8%) reported that their clients receive bonus based on percentage of milk fat. With respect to the breeds, 69.0% (n = 29) of our respondents indicated that Holstein was the primary breed used in the Brazilian dairy farms, followed by Girolando (n = 13; 31.0%). When asked about the type of production system used by their clients, 40.5% (n = 17) of the nutritionists reported grazing system offering concentrate feedstuffs only during milking, 19.0% (n = 8) reported the use of feedlots, whereas 16.7% (n = 7) responded only grazing system. Only 14.3% (n = 6) and 9.5% (n = 4) of our participants indicated that their clients use free stall and loose housing, respectively. With respect to the reproductive management, nutritionists reported that 88.1% of the farms serviced by them use artificial insemination. Likewise, in terms of heat detection, the visual observation was indicated by 90.7% (n = 39) of the nutritionists surveyed as the most used method. This study presents a part of an overview of the practices and management recommendations adopted in the Brazilian dairy farms. The results obtained in this survey may help to identify and solve problems in dairy cattle operations, such as the improving of milk quality and heat detection methods.
Keywords: production, milk, reproduction

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