

Perception of University Students on Key Dairy Calf and Cow Management Practices and Welfare: A Case Study

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The overall objective of this study was to assess the perception of undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya on selected dairy calf and cow management practices and welfare, and to assess the knowledge and awareness of undergraduates on dairy calf and cow welfare. The specific objective was, to investigate the factors affecting the perception. The survey was conducted using 357 undergraduate students representing three-degree programs who were in their first to final year. The survey was categorized into 6 main groups; demographic factors, eating habits of undergraduates, relationship with animals, and knowledge, perception, and attitudes on selected management practices. Data were collected through a google form questionnaire. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Kruskal-Wallis and Pearson correlation tests were used to study the relationship between perception and independent variables. According to the results, the majority of undergraduates participated in the survey were females (52%) and the rest were males (48%). Undergraduates' perception on calf and cow management practices and welfare were significantly affected by degree programs ($P<0.05$), gender ($P<0.05$), and experience with rearing dairy cattle ($P<0.05$). Undergraduates' academic year, religion, area of origin, and eating habits did not significantly affect their perception. According to the results of correlation matrix, knowledge, perception, and attitudes were correlated ($P<0.01$). The majority of undergraduates participated in the survey (61%) were aware of key dairy calf and cow management practices and welfare. However, most of the responses with respect to perception on management practices and welfare were 'neither agree or disagree'. It is suggested that perception related to key dairy calf and cow management practices and welfare should be improved, possibly through better learning opportunities.

Keywords: Attitudes, Knowledge, Management practices, Perception, Welfare

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