

A herbal feed additive shows potential to improve metabolic situation in early lactating dairy cows

M Walkenhorst ¹, S Ivemeyer ², R Schaette ³, P Mayer ³, G Arndt ³

¹Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Division of Animal Science, Frick, Switzerland

²Department of Farm Animal Behaviour and Husbandry, University of Kassel, Witzenhausen, Germany

³Dr. Schaette GmbH, Bad Waldsee, Germany

Kongressbeitrag

The gap between performance and feed intake in early lactating dairy cows often leads to metabolic imbalance which is connected to udder inflammation (UI).

A study with 72 dairy cows calving from November 2010 to March 2011 on 10 Swiss and German farms was conducted to test the effect of a herbal feed additive (HFA) containing mainly *Urtica dioica* L. (herba), *Silybum marianum* (L.) Gaert. (fructus), *Artemisia absinthium* L. (herba) and *Achillea millefolium* L. (herba).

Cows were stratified (farm and milk yield) randomised divided into three groups. From 14 days prior predicted calving to the end of the following lactation cows received daily 100 g pellets containing **A**: 100% HFA, **B**: 50% HFA and 50% alfalfa and **C**: 100% alfalfa (placebo). Two or three cows per group were included per farm. Farmers documented the pellet intake individually per cow on a daily base. Cows with an intake less than two third of the offered dose per lactation part (early: day 1 – 100; mid: day 101 – 200; late: day 201 – 300) were excluded from analyse (A: 6 cows, B: 4 cows, C: 0 cows).

Weekly milk samples from a healthy udder quarter were taken in lactation week 1 – 10 to analyse the aceton content indicating metabolic imbalance. Milk recording data (milk yield, milk contents and somatic cell score as UI marker) as well as the development of the body condition score, treatment, intercalving period and culling rate were analysed.