Online survey of health prophylaxis and management practices on Swiss dairy farms
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Health prophylaxis and management practices play a major role in the success of dairy herd health programs. Many prophylactic measures have been described and advised, however, there is little data available on how these or other measures are valued and implemented in the field. The aims of this study were to gather information regarding the most important and frequently used dairy farm prophylactic measures, and to identify links between such measures and certain disease outcomes. A trilingual online questionnaire was designed that contained 75 questions divided into 5 sections (general farm management, feeding practices, reproductive management, udder health and demographic information). The questionnaire was sent by email in March 2011 to a stratified random sample of 2,285 Swiss dairy farmers, of which more than 50% responded. Management practices varied considerably between dairy farms; 51% used homeopathy, 57% herbal medicine, 50% prophylactic antihelminthic treatments, 93% antimicrobial dry-cow treatments, 77% post-milking teat disinfection, 55% propylenglycol supplements before or after calving, 88% calcium supplements at calving and 79% magnesium supplements. Herd size, regional variation and barn type played an important role in the implementation of different prophylactic measures. Currently, negative binomial regression models are being used to identify factors associated with (1) incidence of clinical mastitis; and (2) monthly somatic cell counts >200,000 cells/ml for tie-stalls and free-stalls separately. These results will be presented during the conference.