Are treatment decisions regarding mild clinical mastitis in dairy cows influenced by farmer and herd characteristics?
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In the Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, the legal requirement is that a cow has to be examined by a veterinarian before antibiotics can be prescribed. Consequently the farmer’s perceived needs for antibiotic treatment of the cow with mastitis will affect whether a veterinarian is contacted or not. As disease recording is based on veterinary registrations, the incidence of treated and recorded mastitis cases is influenced by the behaviour of the farmer when detecting a case of mild clinical mastitis (MCM). Nordic dairy farmers have previously been shown to differ regarding this behaviour. The study used a questionnaire based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). According to TPB a person’s behavioural intention is a proxy for the actual behaviour and is decided by three psychological constructs; attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control of the behaviour. It was shown that the behavioural intention to contact a veterinarian for a visit to the herd the same day as detecting a case of MCM was significantly lower in Sweden compared to the other Nordic countries. It was further demonstrated that several demographic parameters, e.g. the milking system and the farmer’s own rating of the mastitis incidence in the herd, were associated with the farmers’ behavioural intention to contact a veterinarian. It was also found that in all four Nordic countries, the attitude of the farmers was the most influential predictor of behavioural intention in the TPB model. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to further explore how the attitudes to mild clinical mastitis are influenced by the farmer and herd characteristics. This study will include the responses from the Swedish farmers (n=199, 52% of distributed questionnaires). Results from linear model analyses of the associations will be presented.