

SEARCHING FOR PHENOTYPES TO IMPROVE WELFARE IN AVILEÑA-NEGRA IBÉRICA BEEF CATTLE BREED: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Carmen Giné¹, Cristina Meneses¹, M. Jesús Carabaño¹, M. Mar González², Alba Hernández², Carmen González¹, Fátima Vicente¹, Marta Álvarez³, Jesús De La Fuente⁴, Clara Díaz¹.

¹INIA, CSIC, Madrid, Spain; ²RAEANI, Ávila, Spain; ³ULE, León, Spain; ⁴UCM, Madrid, Spain.

Nowadays, animal welfare is of big concern for the civil society. Regardless the ethical issues, it is also a main priority for beef farmers. It is so because an animal with a lack of welfare it is an animal under stress and stress is affecting any aspect of its productive life due to physiological changes resulting from disturbed homeostasis. The Avileña-Negra Ibérica (ANI) breed is a Spanish local beef cattle reared under extensive conditions. Animals of this breed show a large variability in their reactivity when exposed to common triggers of stress. Individual temperament is one component of the response to stress. The objective of this work was to establish a procedure to evaluate temperament in ANI calves at the Control Center for the postweaning phase and estimate the repeatability of temperament indicators. The final aim is to identify coping styles of calves when dealing with stress sources. Data were recorded in 29 male calves between 181 and 447 days of age. The number of records per animal varied between three and five. A total of 84 observations per indicator were obtained. Temperament indicators were flight time (FT) which is the time (in second) needed to cover a fixed distance of 1.83 m (Burrow et al, 1988). FT was recorded digitally, using a timing system with two infrared sensors (FarmTek, North Wylie, TX) or manually, using a conventional chronometer. In addition, two subjective scores were assigned: flight score (FS) measured in four categories and restraint score (RS) in five categories. The repeatabilities were 0.42, 0.35 and 0.15 for FT, FS and RS, respectively. The objective indicator (FT) showed higher repeatability than FS and RS. At this point, it is unknown whether the low repeatabilities are due to the procedure in itself or caused by changes in the process of dealing with stress of the animals when they are exposed several times to the same management/stressor. Now, we are recording additional information to assess the value of these indicator traits as proxies of temperament.