

## **CowSignals® Workshops – Why?**

We wanted to know what the 1400 participants of CowSignals workshops in dairy barns took home and how it changed their routine. That's why Nicole Gericke and Carole Fischer-Tenhagen did a research project on behalf of Alta Germany and Vetvice Holland, in which 170 farmers told us about their changes.

Most of the farmers came to the workshop with some prior information about CowSignals because they had already heard a lecture or read the book. They chose to participate because they were interested in identifying possible improvements to be made in their management. Those who had attended a lecture remembered the nice atmosphere, the amusing approach and the convincing body language of the Dutch lecturer.

The take home message for all of them was: We have to practice good observation and we have to learn how to interpret all the information that we get from observing our cows and barn. Most participants said the workshop has made them better and more conscious observers of their cows during the normal work routine.

What changes did they make? In most cases, a lot of small, inexpensive and very practical changes were made to meet the needs of the dairy cows: so more Feed, Water, Light, Air, Space and Rest. The principle of Look – Think –Act is working. These farmers are pushing up feed or offering fresh feed more often.. A quarter of the farmers have made a special group for cows at risk (a tender love and care group for fresh and lame cows) to encourage more rest, more feed intake and better observation of these important animals. They clean the water troughs more often and leave the lights on for a longer day length. To get more resting time and easier standing up and laying down, more than a third of the farmers moved the neck rail forward and put more bedding material in the cubicle. They clean the walking surface more often and already 40 farmers out of the 170 have roughened the floors to prevent slipping of cows. One year after the workshop, the concepts taught are still having an influence as participants continue to make improvements in their barns and in their management.

Most importantly, we wanted to know if they the were happy with the results of these changes. Almost all the farmers were convinced that the changes they made were profitable. Many farmers reported that feed intake went up. Others saw better fertility results. More than a third of the farmers stated that recognizing important cowsignals early and responding to them, is a good thing and it makes their work more enjoyable!

For more information about the successful CowSignals Workshops and Trainings for farmers and advisors, go to: [www.cowsignals.com](http://www.cowsignals.com) for more information about the CowSignals® training company from Vetvice, Holland.

New courses include: Hoof Signals, From calf to heifer Signals and Fertility Signals