

Development of an operational tool for assessing and managing the welfare of sheep and goats on farms in France

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INTRODUCTION

Animal welfare is a social concern shared by all the small ruminant sectors in France and is a priority in their action plans.

No consensual tool for assessing and managing the welfare of these animals in French farming systems was available before this project.

The CMOUBIENE project aims to develop a welfare assessment and management tool for the sheep (milk and meat) and goat sectors, as part of a co-construction approach including all stakeholders.

THE MAIN STEPS TO DEVELOP THE TOOL

① Focus groups with farmers, technicians, and veterinarians to analyze their expectations and express their needs.

② A think tank with the sectors to validate all decisions regarding the functioning of the tool (selection of indicators to be integrated into the tool, the tool's specifications, etc.): **A tool for advice and communication for the sheep and goat sectors.**

③ Selection of scientifically validated indicators to integrate into the tools.

GOOD NUTRITION:

- * Visual assessment of body condition
- * Access to feed
- * Access to water
- * Condition of the coat



GOOD HOUSING:

- * Cleanliness of the bedding
- * Stocking density
- * Environmental conditions

GOOD NUTRITION:

- * Body condition scoring (ewes) and dropout lambs
- * Access to feed
- * Access to water (in housing)



GOOD HOUSING:

- * Clean fleece
- * Clean udder (in the sheepfold)
- * Moisture in the wool (interior)
- * Annual shearing of ewes over 12 months old *
- * Density
- * Length of hooves (adults)

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

- * Access to the outdoors
- * Enrichment
- * Stationary human test



GOOD HEALTH

- * Disbudding
- * Injuries
- * Abscesses
- * Hooves
- * Lameness
- * Udder health
- * Coughing
- * Prostration
- * Mortality

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

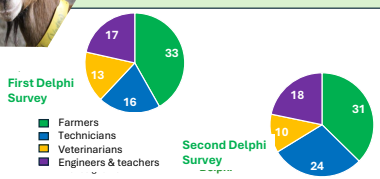
- * Social withdrawal with prostration
- * Stereotypes (animals housed year-round)
- * Human-animal relationship test (conducted by the farmer)



GOOD HEALTH

- * Cough
- * Cleanliness of the hindquarters
- * Lameness
- * Nasal discharge
- * Tail length
- * Injuries
- * Udder integrity
- * Number of ewes with mastitis (ME)

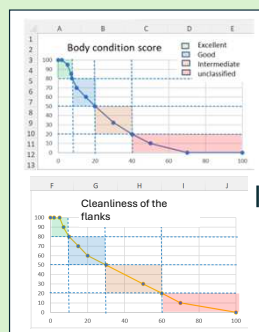
④ Establishing thresholds for the selected indicators through an online Delphi survey.



⑤ Curves for each indicator based on the Delphi survey results

Determination of thresholds for 4 classes

Equations of the curves.



⑥ Expert workshops to synthesize certain indicators and present the results of the indicators against the criteria: ranking of virtual farms.

Goats (%)				
Farms	Very Poor	Normal	Good	Excellent
Farm 1	100	0	0	0
Farm 2	0	100	0	0
Farm 3	0	0	100	0
Farm 4	50	50	0	0
Farm 5	0	50	50	0
Farm 6	50	0	50	0
Farm 7	50	25	25	0
Farm 8	10	50	30	0
Farm 9	0	25	75	0
Farm 10	75	25	0	0
Farm 11	75	0	25	0

⑦ Development of a training kit for the 29 technicians who tested the tool in the field



⑧ A software tool for sheep and an application for goats



Feedback from technicians:



CONCLUSION

A tool for evaluating and managing the welfare of small ruminants will be available to all stakeholders in the sheep and goat sectors. It will serve as a discussion platform for farmers and technicians about the welfare of small ruminants, streamlining the exchange of best practices and process improvements. This tool, co-developed by all parties involved in these sectors, **will offer advice to farmers on how to enhance the welfare of their animals, and will also facilitate communication about the welfare of small ruminants in French farms.**

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