

Developing a Japanese animal welfare certification system for dairy cows*Tetsuya Seo and Mika Kitamura**Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Japan; seo@obihiro.ac.jp*

In recent years, animal welfare concerns have been increasing among Japanese consumers. However, Japan has no third-party farm animal welfare certification system. We are striving to produce animal welfare assessment standards for certification in dairy cows, and have established the Japanese farm animal welfare association for certifying the farms. Based on a literature review, objective assessment standards were developed for each item simply by judging the results with a circle ('yes') and an X ('no') to denote whether the standards are met. The welfare standards are based on three categories: facilities, management, and animals as follows. In all, 52 items are assessed. The farm can be certified if it receives a score of 80% or more in each category. Facility-based assessment: Indicators are used to assess proper rearing facilities and to assess the barn and outdoor areas for defects that might adversely affect animals. Assessment items include the feed trough size, water trough size, temperature control, calving pens, and cow trainers. Management-based assessment: Indicators are used to assess proper performance of daily rearing management. Assessment items include feed and water trough cleanliness, and bed softness. Animal-based assessment: If animals are diseased, injured or undernourished, then animal welfare is regarded as poor. Assessment items include the hock condition, abnormal behaviour, and body condition. To acquire certification, the farm would be inspected twice per year during the first year. The inspectors visit a farm to assess whether the farm complies with certification requirements, and subsequently report the assessment results. After the association certifies a farm, the farmer can display the association label when selling dairy products. Such certified products will be sold in 2017.