

Benchmarking performance of herds in a veterinary practice

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Introduction

Annual studies since 2010 of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across 500 milk recording herds emphasise the wide differences in performance between UK dairy herds (Hanks and Kossaibati, 2015).

Over 60 production, fertility and health KPIs are used to emphasise strengths and weaknesses of individual herds as the basis for discussion with farmers.

This benchmarking of individual herds is readily extended to groups of herds, such as the clients across a veterinary practice.

Materials and Methods

The KPIs for milk recording herds in a vet practice are generated by the InterHerd+ program for a specified date. The KPI calculations are identical, and so directly comparable, to those figures generated by the 500 study herds.

The performance of the practice's herds can be directly compared to the 500 herds for any KPI to show:

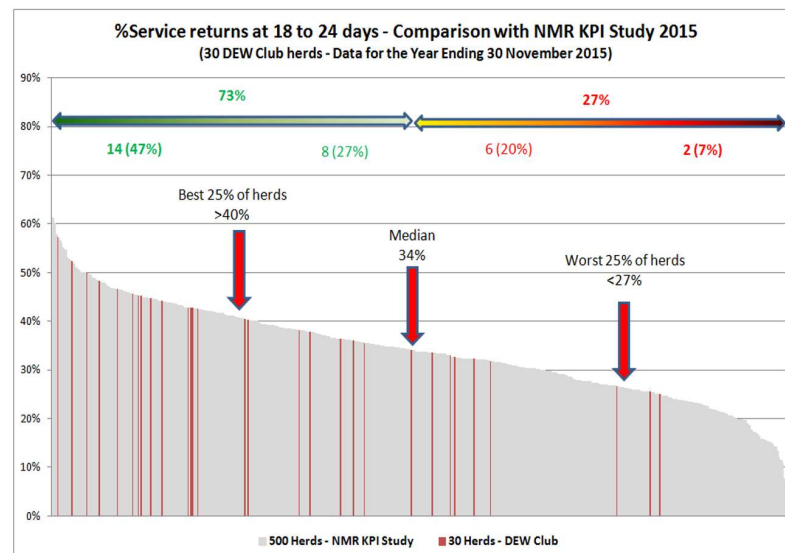
- the number of practice herds that would qualify for the top/bottom 25% of herds nationally.
- A graphic (Figure 1) of the relative position of the practice herds (red) against the herds in the 500 herd study (grey).

Calculating the KPIs for an earlier reference date allows comparison of current and past performance (Figure 2):

- Has the overall number/percentage of client herds in the top/bottom quartile increased over time?
- Which herds have made the most significant progress over time?
- Why have some herds made greater progress than others?

Figure 1. Performance of a vet practice's herds relative to the of 500 herds

The grey background represents the fertility measure for each of the 500 herds from the 2015 study. The vertical red arrows divide the herds in to quartiles so top quartile performance requires a herd figure >40%. The red bars represent the performance of the practice herds. In this example, 14 (47%) of the practice's herds achieve top quartile performance levels

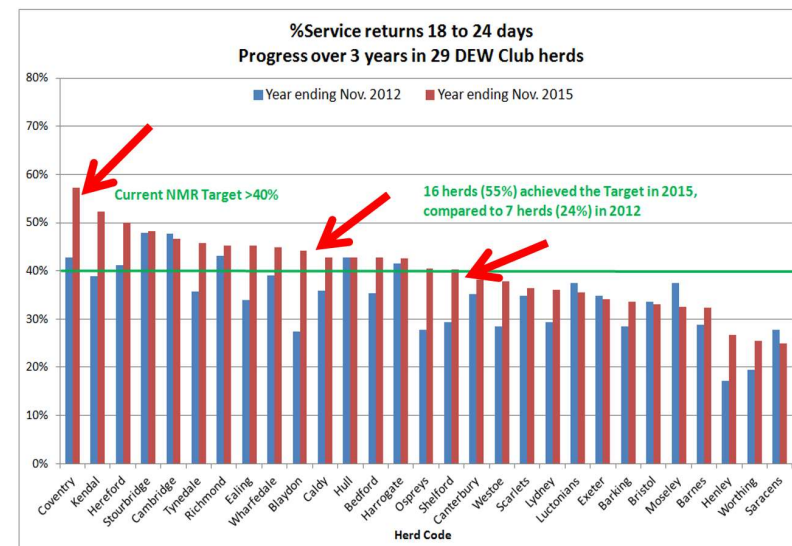


Conclusions and key messages

- Superimposing the performance of a practice's herds provides a measure of their relative performance (nationally and within the practice) including
 - A baseline measure of practice performance for key areas of fertility and health
 - Highlighting areas of concern for specific herds
 - Identifying successful herds within the practice
- Comparing changes in herd performance over time:
 - Highlights herds that have made most progress
 - Measures improvement of the practice's overall performance
 - Provides good news stories within the practice (why do some herds make dramatic improvement when others do not?) and focal points for farmer discussion groups,
 - Quantifies the difference in progress between farms that do/don't engage with their vet practice

Figure 2. Change in individual herd performance over three years

Individual herds have aliases to ensure anonymity. Arranged in descending order of current performance highlights those herds that have made the most progress over time. It also allows comparison of the number/% of herds achieving top quartile performance NOW compared to three years ago.



References

1. Hanks, J. and Kossaibati, M. (2015), A study of herd performance in 500 Holstein / Friesian herds for the year ending 31st August 2015. Veterinary Epidemiology & Economics Research Unit (VEERU), School of Agriculture Policy & Development, University of Reading. Available online: www.nmr.co.uk/kpi_study_2015

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