

# Communication between veterinarians and dairy farmers: Effect of communication training on communication skills and mental wellbeing in veterinarians, farmer satisfaction and herd health outcomes

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Diseases reduce dairy cattle health and welfare, causing huge losses in the Canadian dairy sector. Veterinarians are a key information source for dairy farmers regarding disease prevention and treatment. Well-developed communication skills increase farmer satisfaction and increase adherence to veterinary advice, thereby enhancing herd health. Additionally, concerns about veterinarians' mental wellbeing are rising, and improving client-centered communication might benefit their mental health. To date, no longitudinal studies have assessed efficiency of communication training on communication competencies, mental health and farm consultancy. Key objectives of my PhD project are to determine: 1) communication characteristics specific to veterinarian-dairy farmer interactions; and 2) effects of communication training on communication skills and mental wellbeing in veterinarians, farmer satisfaction and herd health outcomes. First, I will conduct interviews on participants' current knowledge/attitudes about communication during farm visits and assess herd health status by examining farm data. To examine communication patterns, I will record and analyze veterinarian-farmer interactions during these visits. Secondly, veterinarians will participate in a novel communication training. Finally, I will determine effects of training on communication skills and mental wellbeing in veterinarians, farmer satisfaction and herd health outcomes by repeating initial measurements. **Implications.** Communication training will benefit the Canadian dairy sector by enhancing farmer satisfaction with herd health consultancy, increasing adherence to veterinary advice and improving livestock health and productivity. Additionally, results of this study are expected to enhance mental health of veterinarians and inform development of teaching communication skills in veterinary students and graduate veterinarians.