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INTUITIVE *VERSUS* SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF CATTLE BEHAVIOUR

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The intuitive understanding of the behaviour of cattle by farmers and their practical knowledge of how cattle should be handled was studied and compared with knowledge from animal behaviour science. We interviewed 20 Finnish farmers on family dairy farms using loose housing systems. Farmers were female or male with more than 10 years of work experience. During and after the morning milking, we asked them questions about animal behaviour and handling practices. The presented data has not been analysed statistically.

Farmers reported that cows establish dominance relations that influence their life (e.g. access to lying, feeding, and milking) and that cows having grown up together stay close to each other. They considered that human body language and voice are very important, recommending smooth walking and no shouting when handling cows. They reported that positive handling of young calves and the presence of the farmer at first calving ease further handling. These elements are confirmed by results from animal behaviour science, which describe similar consequences for social hierarchy, preferential relationships, and handling practices.

For farmers, happy cows are relaxed (lying and ruminating with eyes half open), healthy cows actively observe their environment whereas sick cows often lower their head and ears and are not doing the same activity as the other cows. Farmers also detect sick cows from their eyes. These elements have not broadly been investigated by science.

These results suggest that social sciences can help formulating questions to be studied by animal science, in order to increase our knowledge of animal behaviour.