

7 Summary

Development of an internet based information system about alternative therapies in organic livestock farming

Medical care of the increasing number of organic livestock causes new problems for veterinary surgeons, farmers, consultants and other involved people. The regulations of organic farming (e.g. Council Regulation (EC) No 2092/91) have to be considered. According to these regulations effective alternative treatments (e.g. phytotherapeutic and homeopathic products) have to be used in preference to allopathic products chemically synthesised. In veterinary education neither veterinary alternative medicine nor characteristics of organic livestock husbandry are taught sufficiently. The access of information and search for literature about specific topics is difficult, because the information is spread in a variety of sources. The objective of this project was to develop an internet based information system, to supply the increasing demand for information about alternative therapies in organic productive livestock farming. For this purpose an innovative concept for the compilation of a literature review was developed and implemented. After seven month the information system was already available online (<http://www.oekovet.de>). It comprises a daily growing data base with 231 commented articles as of today. In addition it contains news about alternative medicine, the basics of alternative therapy, descriptions of the legal regulations of organic farming and a database for continuing education.

The available publications were evaluated systematically and in respect to practicality, to give the user an overview about their quality. The objective of the survey was to support the practitioner's decision making in respect of interventions to use in practice. On the basis of developed evaluation criteria the information content, material and methods, the presentation and practicability were evaluated. Out of 231 publications 97 reported clinical trials (42,0 %), 47 contained information from personal experience (20,3 %) and 87 contained opinions of experts like guidance for treatments or descriptions of drugs (37,7 %). Only few publications about clinical trials obtained for the criteria material and methods the grade "satisfying" or "good".

According to these results the improvement of veterinary knowledge about the alternative therapies in livestock medicine is based mainly on inadequately conducted or insufficiently described clinical trials or on personal experiences. The need for well conducted, randomized controlled clinical trials is obvious. The objective for the future should be, to conduct meta-analyses of clinical trials and consequently develop an "evidence-based veterinary medicine".