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ASTLQ: an integrated population medicine service for dairy cattle

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An epidemiological study of cow-calf operations from north-western Quebec

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The reduction of neonatal calf mortality is a major challenge for herdsmen from north-western Quebec. Diarrhoea and respiratory problems are often associated with these mortalities. An epidemiological study over a 1-year period was conducted on 26 randomly chosen farms with the objective of quantifying the importance of *Escherichia coli* and bovine herpes type 1, bovine diarrhoea, syncytial, corona and rota viruses. Serological tests were conducted on cows and their 3-week-old calves. Fecal samples from calves were analyzed for the presence of *E coli* and corona and rota viruses antigens. Bacteriological and serological tests did not show K99 presence, and 17.69% of the calves were positive to F41 fimbriae. No association was found between any fimbrial antigens and diarrhoea occurring during the first month of age. There were 99.3% and 89.4% seropositive calves and 6.15% and 1.07% calves were positive to fecal excretion for rota and corona viruses respectively; no association was found with the previous episode of diarrhoea. Fecal excretion of rota virus was associated with the presence of liquid stools at the moment of sampling.

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The objective of the research project ASTLQ is to develop a population medicine service for dairy cattle herds based on regular visits by the veterinarian and a computerized health information management system. The project started on November 1990 and will end in November 1993. There are 125 veterinarians participating in the project, which they entirely subsidized. The participants come from 38 clinics and have enrolled 1 300 dairy herds in the project. A computer program is used in the clinics to collect and validate data provided by herdsmen and their veterinarian. The software is also used to organize farm visits and to produce reports. A central data base is part of the health management system to allow herd comparisons. This centralized activity ensures standardization of clinical data, provides material for continuing education of veterinary practitioners and provides an interface between practitioners and epidemiologists.