



ASPA 25th Congress Book of Abstract

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Italian Journal of Animal Science

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- Livestock systems, management and environment
- Non-ruminant or ruminant nutrition and feeding
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ASPA 26th Congress

Turin (ITALY), June 17 -20, 2025

Guest Editors

**Giustino Gaspa, Joana Maria Venda Da Graca Nery,
Laura Gasco & Manuela Renna***

Table of Contents

MAIN LECTURES

XX

POSTERS

XX

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

XX

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ASPA 26th Congress

Turin (ITALY), June 17-20, 2025

#ASPA2025

ASPA 26th Congress Book of Abstract

The 26th Congress of the Animal Science and Production Association

“Innovations in animal sciences: shaping the way for a sustainable future” is under patronage of Loghi Patrocini

**Turin (ITALY),
June 17 -20, 2025**

Venue

**Campus SAMEV (Scuola di Agraria e medicina Veterinaria)
Largo Braccini 2, Grugliasco (TO)- ITALY**

O338

Mother-offspring management in different dairy farm animal species as guidance for the implementation of cow-calf-Contact systems?

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Cow-calf Contact (CCC) systems are beneficial for both cow and calf welfare by promoting udder health and maternal behaviour, calf growth and social learning and by reducing abnormal behaviour. Despite these advantages and increasing public pressure to convert to CCC systems, dairy farmers are reluctant to adopt this practice. Their concerns relate to financial performance, staff wellbeing, lack of suitable barn facilities, scarce know-how, and animal health. In addition, farmers that have converted to CCC systems often report some difficulties, like stress during separation of cow and calf and less saleable milk. Finding best CCC practices by ensuring animal welfare and farmer viability is essential for a successful implementation of CCC systems. Aim of this contribution was a systematic literature review on mother-young management to find strategies used in other dairy farm animal species that could be used in dairy cattle farming. A total of 381 records on mother-young management in sheep, goats, buffaloes, and equids was found using Web of Science and Scopus. After manual screening using specific inclusion/exclusion criteria, 24 records were included in this review. Records overview shows that dairy calves spend the shortest time (minutes to a few hours) with their dams compared to intensively farmed dairy sheep and goats (1–2 days), buffaloes (up to 6 days) and dairy equids (7–10 months). A major challenge in mother-young management is separation stress. Suggested strategies to reduce this stress are gradual separation (8 records) and avoiding a simultaneous occurrence of weaning and separation (7 records). These strategies are not evenly supported by evidence and more research is needed to provide best practices to farmers and to improve the effectiveness of CCC systems in different farm settings. Other potential strategies to reduce separation stress include Contact with (familiar) peers and positive handling by stock people. Farmers are also often concerned about milk yield loss due to the presence of the offspring: to reduce this loss and shorten the period of anoestrus, restricted suckling is often proposed. The overview of strategies that this review provides could help to solve

problems that CCC farmers may experience. Combined with research into economic viability, governmental support through incentives and effective communication and education strategies, these practices could allow the implementation of CCC systems by dairy cattle farmers.

Research supported by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, Progetti di Ricerca di Rilevante Interesse Nazionale (PRIN 2022 Brscic – grant 2022YNENCK) titled ‘The Caring Dairy: promoting prolonged cow-calf Contact in nature based animal production systems’.

O220

Genomic characterisation and diversity assessment in endangered Italian sheep breeds

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Despite the growing diffusion of some cosmopolite specialised breeds, several autochthonous populations are still reared in marginal areas of Italy. Today, many of these populations encounter the threat of extinction due to factors such as small population size, geographic isolation, limited economic viability, and declining interest in breeding. Assessing their genetic diversity is important to enhance these breeds and their unique traits.