SKILLS OF STUDENTS UNDERGOING A SHORTENED COURSE OF PALPATION OF THE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS OF COWS USING THE PER RECTAL TECHNIQUE

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In the era of the coronavirus pandemic, learning practical skills in field conditions is burdened with a significant risk. It results from the high probability of an announcement of a lockdown, fears of breeders and students themselves against infection, as well as the increasing costs of logistics. As a result, it becomes necessary to create an alternative, flexible method of training, better suited to the changed conditions, while maintaining the existing number of hours of study, the size of student groups and the achieved learning outcomes. In our own research, we proposed a shortened, intensive training of students in per rectal palpation techniques. The aim of the study was to evaluate the clinical skills of students after an intensive animal training course in field conditions. The study involved 37 students of the 7th semester of veterinary medicine. Depending on their commitment motivation and field of interest, they were divided into three groups, according to previously established criteria. The first group (I) comprised of highly motivated students who plan to work with farm animals in the future, were raised on cattle farms and had some previous technical experience and certain skills in conducting a rectal examination of cows. The second group (II) consisted of students who were highly motivated (willing to work in the future with farm animals), but inexperienced in rectal examination. Before starting rectal examinations, the students from groups I and II practiced ovarian size assessment on ovarian rubber phantoms. During four training sessions, they had to determine the size of 10 ovaries. The last group (III) was composed of the least motivated students, who did not want to work with farm animals in the future and had no experience in rectal examination. Each group made a palpation of the reproductive organ, taking into account the cervix, the size and consistency of the uterus, the width of its horns and the size of the ovaries. At the same time, the test time was measured. Palpation results were verified by an experienced veterinarian. The research was carried out

every day for 5 consecutive days, each time in a different farm. Statistical analyze was performed using the statistical tools package of STATISTICA.PL version 7.1. The distributions of observations were compared using the Chi-square test, assuming significant differences in the distribution at $P<0.005$. The obtained results indicate that during the training, the correctness of recognizing the structures of the reproductive system was the highest in the motivated group with basic experience in palpation of the reproductive organ and in the group interested in working with farm animals. The skill level in the group not interested in work with farm animals in the future was 24% and was lower than in groups I and II ($P<0.05$). After the training, the students of groups II and I correctly (100%) recognized the structures of the reproductive system. It was slightly lower in group I (92%; $p> 0.05$). In summary; intensive animal science course in field conditions, ensured obtaining satisfactory skills in per rectal palpation of the reproductive organs in cows.

Key words: students, intensive learning, rectal palpation