Discrepancy between expected and actual benefits of automatic heat detectors in commercial dairy herds.

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Context and question

- Automatic heat detectors (AHD): one of the «first» PLF devices (number, commercialisation),
- Which have answered to expressed expectations of farmers

Do the farmers get what they expected?

Decision-making tools
1- Identification of farms:
32 commercial dairy farms within 2 lists provided by advisors,
To enhance the diversity (pedo-climatic characteristics, breed, size, yield/cow, milking system, AHD system...).
From West (oceanic climate, plain) to East (low mountain)

Bretagne

Jura (Doubs)
## Diversity of systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of dairy cows</th>
<th>Milk yield (kg/cow/y)</th>
<th>Milking system</th>
<th>Reproduction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>30 to 135</td>
<td>7 000 to 10 400</td>
<td>10/20</td>
<td>Calving period:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jura</td>
<td>39 to 194</td>
<td>6000 to 11 800</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>AI only (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>AI + Bull (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Visual detection
- AI only (18)
- AI + Bull (14)
- Visual detection

1 to 8 partners  0 to 100% grass  Standard or PDO (Comté) production
Materials and methods: semi-directive survey

1- Identification of farms

2- Interview guide

• Which motivations? | Why?
• How do you make the choice? | What?
• How do you use the AHD? | How?
• Which satisfaction and benefits? | So?
1- Identification of farms

2- Interview guide

3- Interviews
Systematic recording.
First step: spontaneous expression; second step: proposition of items.
≈1h30/interview

4- Qualitative treatment of interviews
Why?

- Mainly to increase detection and/or reproduction performances
- Especially when sexed semen was used (16/25)

Consistent with the speeches of companies

[Better heat detection leads to higher pregnancy rates and fewer open days; saves drug costs; saves on observation, pregnancy checks and hormone treatments]
How? From AHD alert to service: various practices, from delegation to security
So? A light **felt impact** on technic/economic performances

Most of them don’t really know if their device have an impact

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« I have the impression that » « Finally I don’t know » « Finally I don’t care »
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So? A **strong impact** on labour comfort

Less stress but few effect on **working time** (5/32)
So? In short

- **29/32** are satisfied (or fully satisfied) with their AHD

- Even though they didn't get what they expected!

  “I feel safer” “It reassures”
In conclusion

• AHD is a good example of convenient and easy to use PLF device.
• There is a discrepancy between expected and actual benefits of AHD
• Comfort in their labour, and not only working time, is one of the keys for farmer’s satisfaction.

How to evaluate comfort? How to include comfort in decision-making tools?
Many thanks for your attention

Acknowledgment to the French Ministry of Agriculture for founding this study
Acknowledgment to all the farmers and others people who participated and help