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## STSM report – Claes Anderson

Dr Alain Boissy at Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA) in France has been one of my co-supervisors since I started the PhD education in 2012. Alain Boissy is an expert in sheep cognition and welfare, which are important topics to my PhD on reward related behaviours in lambs. In 2014 I visited INRA outside Clermont-Ferrand in central France and we started planning a future study. This visit also allowed me to meet the researchers and technical personnel in their group to get better insight into their research, but also to visit their research facilities. As this research group has a long history of studying cognitive abilities in young and adult sheep, they also have excellent research facilities for such studies which offer great opportunities for cognitive studies in sheep. This led to that we planned for that one of my studies in the PhD education should be carried out at their research facility. In order to pay for my travelling and accommodation during a three months visit I applied for funding from COST Action Dairy Care.

In September 2015 I left Sweden and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences for three months collaboration with INRA in France to perform a cognitive study on lambs including behavioural and physiological measures. This study was conducted on Romane, a dairy breed bred in France. The aim of the study was to assess the effect of controllability and predictability prior to receiving a food reward and how these two factors would have an effect on the behavioural and physiological responses during anticipation.

Initially, we had some problems getting started with the study. There was a reconstruction planned that would be finished just at the time of my arrival;

however there were some delays in this reconstruction. This resulted in that I was not being able to initiate the study as planned and it was also difficult to get accurate information on when all reconstruction would be completed. The initial plan of the study was to spend much time on habituating the lambs to human presence and also to the experimental pens. Due to the reconstructions, habituation to human presence (me) had to be conducted in another stable prior to eventually moving the lambs into the research stable where we could continue with the habituation to the experimental pens. This also resulted in that we had to make some minor adjustments to the original plan. However, in the end we managed to complete the study just prior to my return to Sweden in December and we are currently analysing the data and hopefully this study will result in a publication that will part of my thesis.

Doing a practical study at INRA in France came with both advantages and disadvantages. When I have previously conducted practical studies at my home university, there is always a risk that you have to continue to do regular tasks parallel to the study, such as meetings, teaching etc. Going to another research group meant that I could give this study my whole attention. Another advantage is that when working with researchers you have not previously worked with, there is a great opportunity to learn new information, methodologies and to share experiences. Although the research group at INRA deal with some research topics that my group does not address, there is also some overlap that allowed for me to discuss relevant research questions. Following discussion with the researchers at INRA, I have also conveyed contact details to researchers at INRA for my Swedish colleagues for potential future collaborations.

For disadvantages, coming to a new research group in another country, there is much information to learn about the routines at the facilities and many new faces to remember. Additionally to this, I sometimes also found it difficult to communicate with some of the animal handlers at the stable as my knowledge in French is limited.

The opportunity of living in France was also a great experience. Every morning I took a bus, run by INRA, from the city of Clermont-Ferrand to the INRA office approximately 30 minutes outside the city, and the bus took us back at 5.00 p.m. each evening. Prior to arriving to France, I had difficulties finding accommodation. Advertisements for accommodation were all in French and to get accommodation there was much paper work to fill in. Just prior to going to France I found accommodation in a student resident building in the city. This was practical as it had a restaurant that served breakfast for free and also a very cheap dinner. Connecting with other students there was however difficult. In my impression, most students residing there spoke French as a first or second language but I rarely heard anyone speak English and every time I had questions concerning my room I had to wait until one of the two staff in the lobby that spoke English were working.

Following this research visit to France, I am sure that we will have a strengthened collaboration between INRA and SLU that will continue for many years and result in exchange of ideas and also to co-authorship on publications. Your generous grant allowed for me to experience a great experience that hopefully will lead to a publication, a chapter in my thesis and also a continued collaboration between our research group at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the research group at INRA.

Yours Sincerely,



Claes Anderson