Bridging Global Innovations with Local Dairy Operations:

The Role of Validation Research

Validation research is one of the critical steps in the process of bringing a new solution to the market that will meet the needs of the producer. Conducting validation research on Canadian operations ensures that tools developed across different countries, production systems, management styles and dairy breeds will perform as expected under local conditions.

What is validation research?

Validation research implements newly developed innovations in a controlled setting on commercial farms, referred to as validation farms. The studies are designed by experienced researchers, nutritionists and technical staff, with data collection carried out by technicians or the farm's own employees. The results of these studies will be utilized to confirm whether the findings of the fundamental research hold true under everyday farm conditions.

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Validation research typically involves:

- Monitoring animals in both treatment and control groups to compare the impact of tested innovations against that of normal management practices.
- Regular communication between the researchers and producer to set-up the study, monitor the data collection and troubleshoot any issues that may arise.
- Examples of typical data collection on farm could be:
  - Measuring body weight
  - Recording feed intakes
  - Collecting feed samples
  - Scoring health characteristics

What happens to the data generated by the research?

Data generated on farm is analyzed for differences and trends. The results are used to either confirm the effectiveness of an innovation or lead to further study and improvement. Reports summarizing the findings are presented to the technical teams, and ultimately communicated to producers so they can make informed decisions about their herd management. The results may also be published in scientific journals to communicate findings to a wider audience.

What type of research is performed on validation farms?

Any new product or program that requires real-world testing in the field to address common issues and help producers achieve their goals could be incorporated into a validation study.

Potential examples include:

- New formulations of calf starter rations that improve intakes.
- New feed additives that improve growth performance or milk yield.
- New software that assists with data management and on farm decision-making.

At Trouw Nutrition, dairy feed products such as RM104®, Vivalto® and Cremalto® were each trialed on a validation farm within Canada before entering the Canadian market.

What are the benefits of participating in validation research?

- Exciting opportunity for producers to be leaders in research that could impact the day-to-day operations on their farm and others'.
- Become early adopters of new innovations and benefit from any associated outcomes, such as improved feed efficiency, feed intakes, milk yields, calf growth and many more.
- Help to bring global innovations to the local level to solve costly problems for producers, improve efficiency on farm, and provide new tools and knowledge that will guide decision-making on Canadian dairy farms.

How are validation farms selected?

Validation farms must be:

- Representative of typical conditions in different regions throughout Canada.
- Equipped with sufficient facilities and staff to collect the required data.
- Staff are compensated for the performance of research tasks.
- Able to maintain high standards for data collection.

Validation research serves as a bridge between innovation and practical application on Canadian dairy farms. By rigorously testing new products and technologies under real-world conditions, validation farms play a crucial role in ensuring that global advancements can be effectively adapted to meet local challenges. For producers, participating in these studies not only offers early access to cutting-edge solutions but also contributes to the broader industry's progress.

As Trouw Nutrition continues to expand its network of validation farms, the commitment to delivering reliable, science-backed innovations will help drive more efficient, sustainable dairy farming across Canada.