

## Danish Udder Health Centre – Merging People and Knowledge

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**Background:** Udder health research in Denmark has for decades been divided between different stakeholders, each with their own focus and interest within the large area of “Udder Health and Mastitis”. There has been a long history of research in mastitis and udder health including collaborative projects between the Danish Dairy Board and the Farmers’ organisation (currently named SEGES). Other projects have been exclusively research projects with focus on topics like udder health in organic farming, *Streptococcus agalactia* management and eradication and research on machine milking at Aarhus University (AU).

The main institutions conducting research have been AU (Foulum), KU SUND and the National Veterinary Institute (Currently named DTU Centre for Diagnostics). Funding for mastitis research has mainly been through the Danish milk levy fund. Since the milk levy is paid by the milk producers, the dairy industry has demands on how these funds should be applied in order to create value on the farm.

From the dairy industry point of view, this diversity in stakeholders and different agenda’s might not necessarily be beneficial for the end user – the dairy farmer, who has an interest in new knowledge, implementing scientifically proven procedures and routines to improve animal welfare and economic output of his investment in milk production.

Unfortunately, various projects that were supposed to create synergy and deliver strong results by working across different institutions seem to lack effect.

**Results:** during late 2017, there were initial meetings with different stakeholders; mastitis researchers from KU SUND, The National Veterinary Institute and SEGES Livestock Innovation, discussing the option to establish a Danish Udder Health Centre.

Their inspiration was the Canadian Bovine Mastitis Research Network. The goal was to merge representatives from all aspects of mastitis and udder health in Denmark into not just an informal cooperation, but a solid and interdisciplinary collaboration having full focus on the product – solutions to improve udder health and milk quality at farm level and across projects.

In order to benefit from previous experience, we invited a group of international researchers, including among others researchers from the Canadian network and a similar Dutch network, to gain insights about the structure, research topics and organization of their udder health network. Following insightful discussions, it was clear that the Danish Udder Health Centre must be “centre without walls” where the different people are placed at their home institution and projects are centrally coordinated. This central coordination ensures synergy by merging different interest and knowledge across organisations at a national and international level. SEGES would coordinate projects to ensure the application of research results in practice, in order to create value for farmers. DTU Centre for Diagnostic and KU SUND are as well parts of the core team of the centre.

There will be established a focus group with industry leaders, with the purpose of keeping alignment with demands and an annual expert meeting with international experts to evaluate ongoing and new research.