

FEEDING CALVES, A MATHEMATICAL ACTIVITY

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The poster was designed after the observation and field work in a farm of Lleida (Spain) of the feeding processes of calves. We decided to take a closer look to this daily routine. We were interested in the mathematical processes developed in the daily activities of the farmers of the farm.

There were 280 calves between 2 months and a year old and two people were in charge of all the animals and their daily feeding. Feeding activities include the reorganisation of the animals in smaller groups depending on the age and the quantity of food they needed to receive. The younger ones were fed with artificial milk. The older ones were given feed and straw.

The farmers deal with big quantities of food supplies such as 50000 kilos of feed, 500000 of fresh pressed corn (“Ensilat de blat de moro”) or 200000 kilos of ryegrass, which should be distributed during the year for those 280 calves.

The farmyards were 3 fenced quadrilateral areas; and the feeding had a concrete schedule. It was very interesting to observe the flux of animals between the different spaces as a strategy for feeding since the spaces had an interesting geometrical shape. All three spaces had different size and they were not too big in consideration of the amount of calves they had.

The organisation of the farmers in order to efficiently feed everyday all the animals was very smooth, and gave space for further reflection over the abstract procedure of animal movements, since the spaces were limited to the inside area of the farmyards. The main reflection over the research was directly connected to ethnomathematics. We consider that an ethnomathematical research is a good starting point to approach a social study of the rural mathematics, in concrete, farm mathematics.

References:

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