



Prevalence of production diseases in European organic dairy herds

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CONTEXT: Organic farming aims at good animal health and welfare and seeks to realise that aim by setting minimum standards for housing, feeding and management. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of production diseases in organic dairy herds in four European countries.

MATERIAL & METHODS:

- 192 organic dairy farms (60 in Germany, 23 in Spain, 54 in France, 55 in Sweden)
 - National milk records and animal movement data
 - Interviews and lameness scoring according to Welfare Quality[®]
- Herd-level indicators related to udder health, metabolism, reproduction and lameness were calculated using a common data structure and identical R scripts

RESULTS:

Tab. 1. Farm descriptives

Country	N	AA ^{1,2}	Cow-years ¹	ECM ^{1,3}	Concentrate ^{1,4}
Germany	60	94 (31 - 1.363)	63 (18 - 312)	6.588 (3.685 - 9.743)	1.200 (0 - 3.667)
Spain	23	47 (14 - 631)	30 (12 - 312)	5.742 (3.400 - 8.371)	1.500 (0 - 2.600)
France	54	100 (17 - 325)	61 (7 - 131)	6.378 (2.324 - 8.106)	616 (0 - 1.900)
Sweden	55	200 (77 - 1.600)	68 (23 - 377)	8.979 (5.570 - 10.880)	2.373 (0 - 5.475)
ALL	192	112	60	6.886	1.200

¹ Median (min-max), ² AA - agricultural area (ha), ³ ECM - energy-corrected milk kg per cow and year, ⁴ kg per cow and year

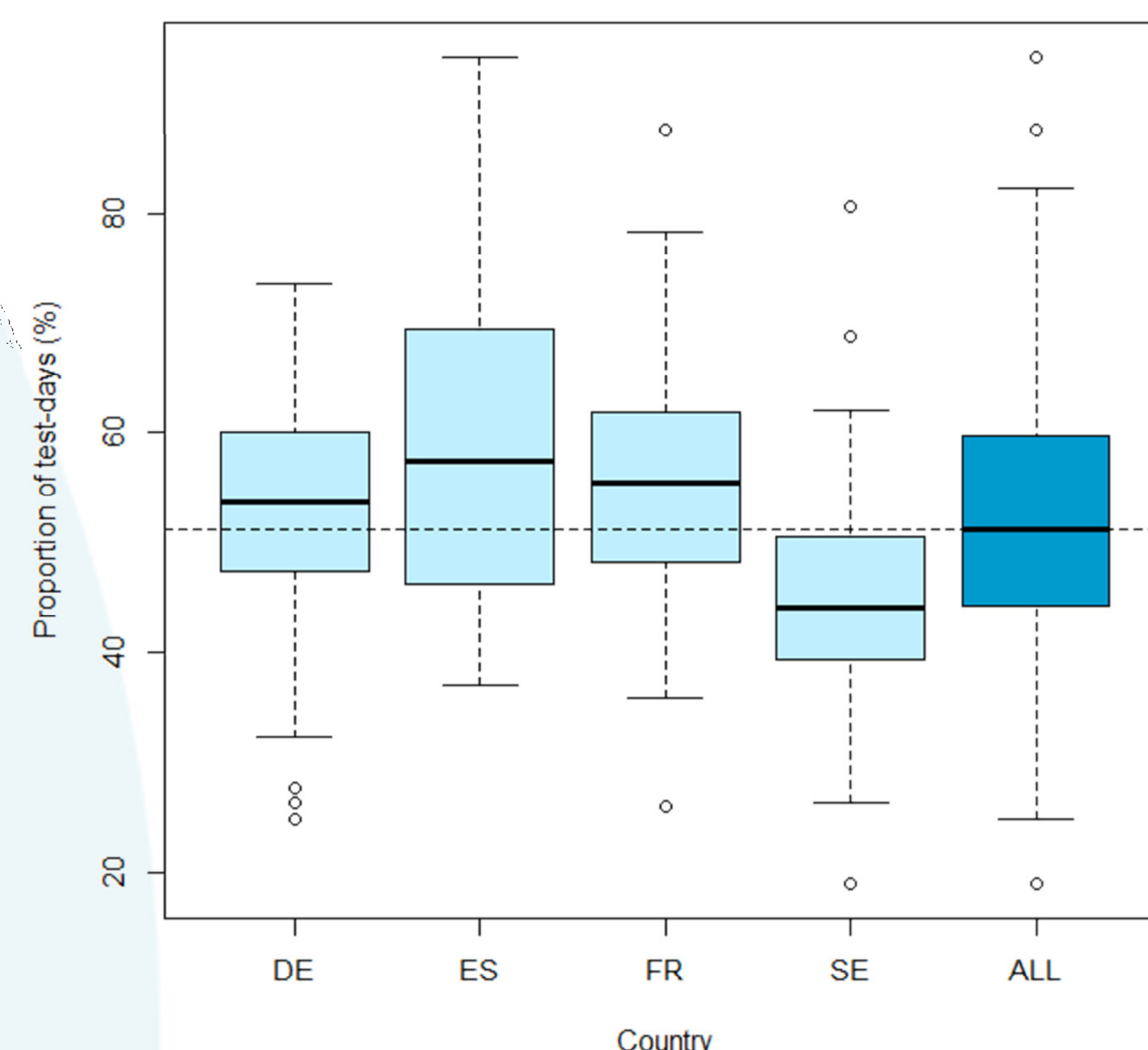


Fig. 1. Prevalence of subclinical mastitis (SCC > 100,000 somatic cells/ml)

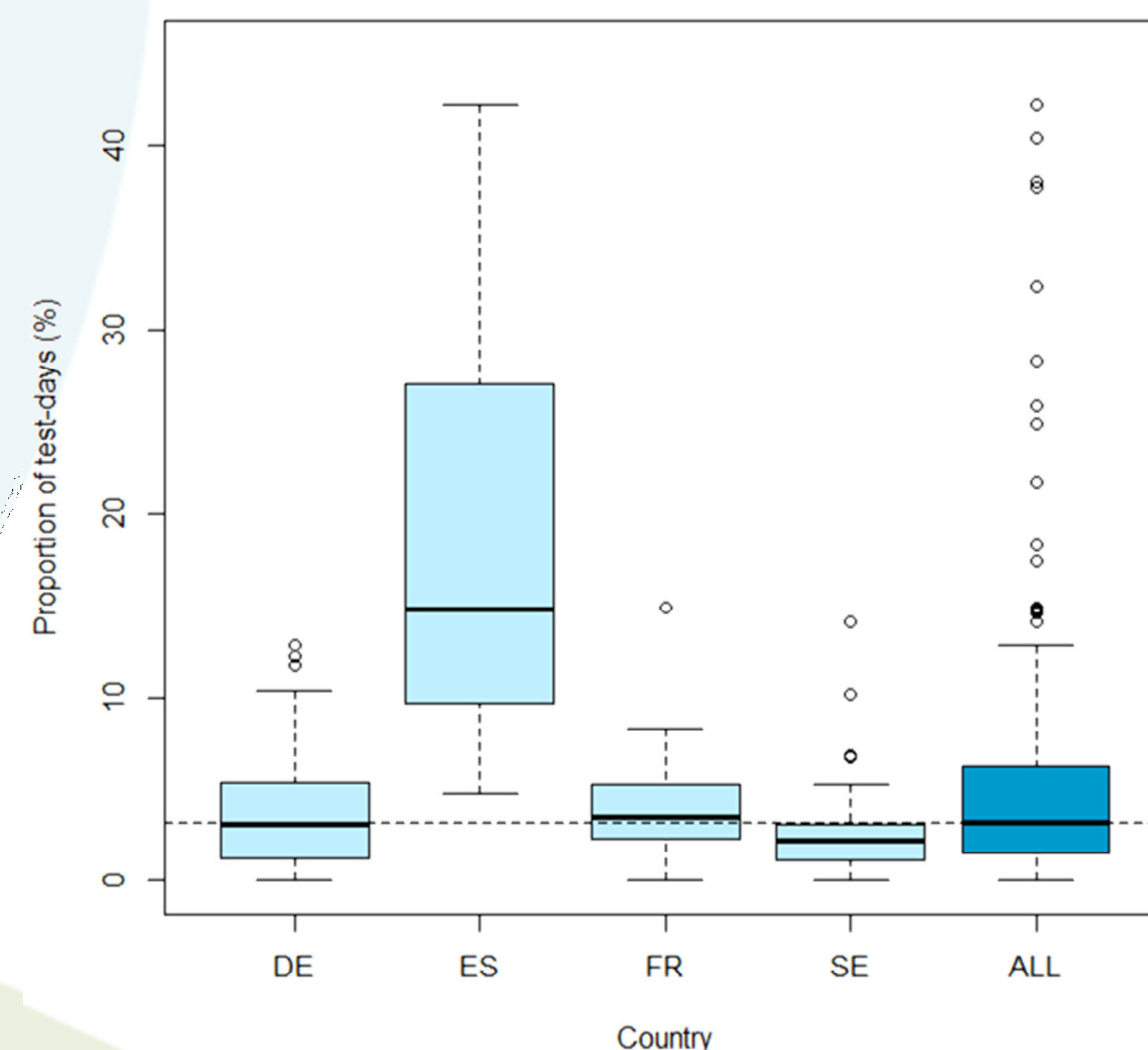


Fig. 2. Prevalence of subclinical acidosis (milk fat < 3.0% after 30 days in milk)

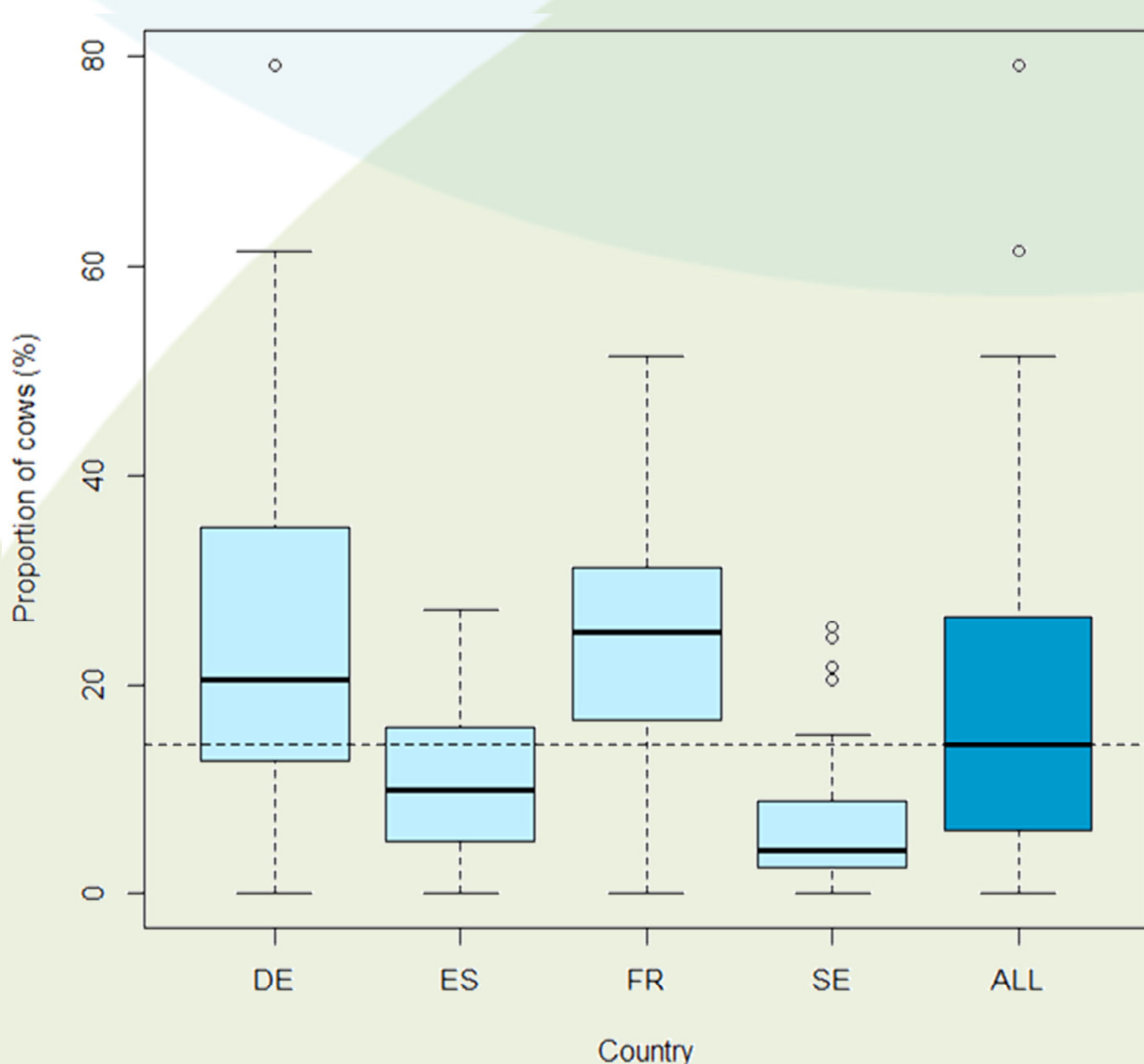


Fig. 5. Prevalence of clinical lameness (mild and severe)

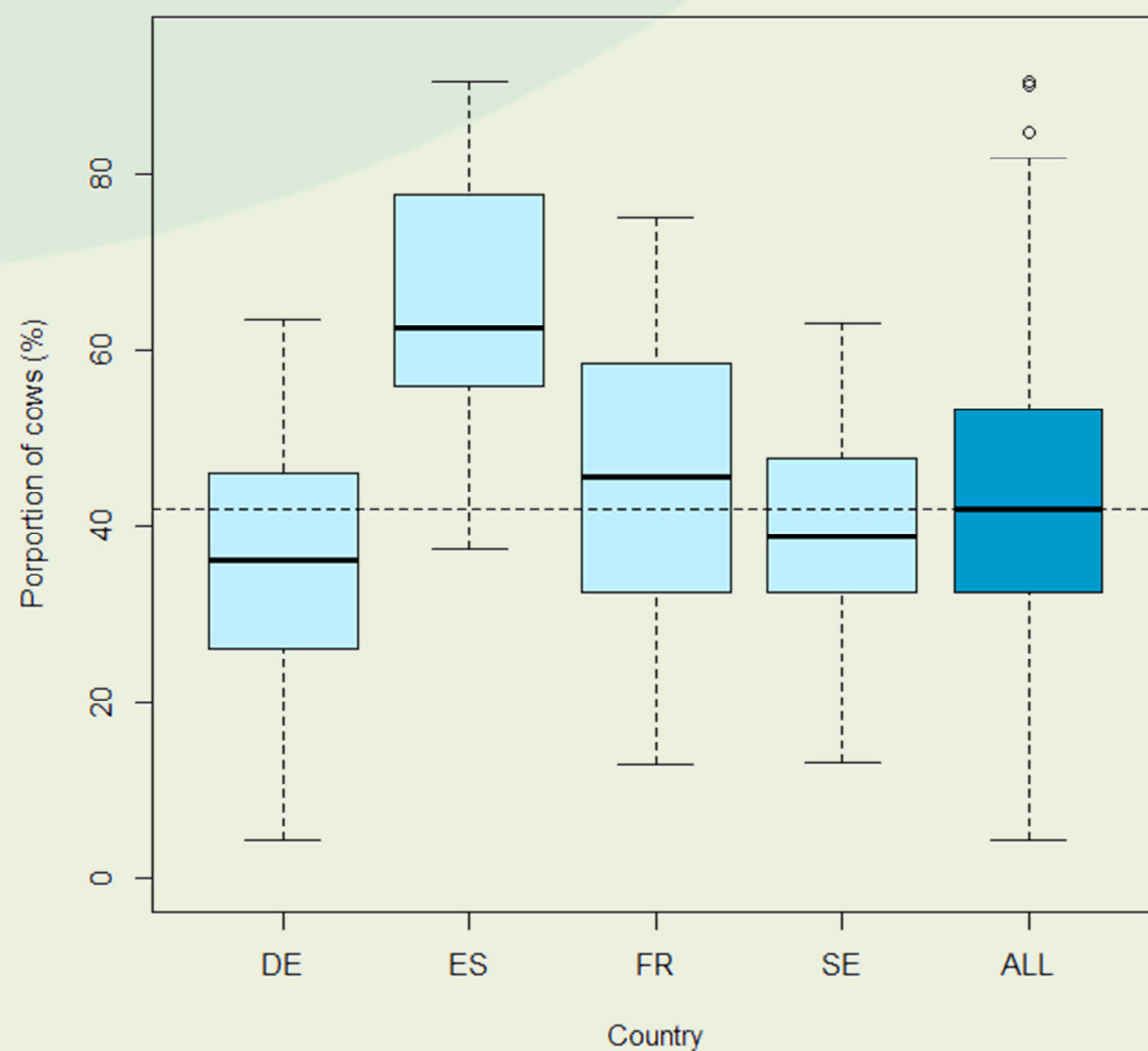


Fig. 4. Prevalence of prolonged calving interval (> 400 d)

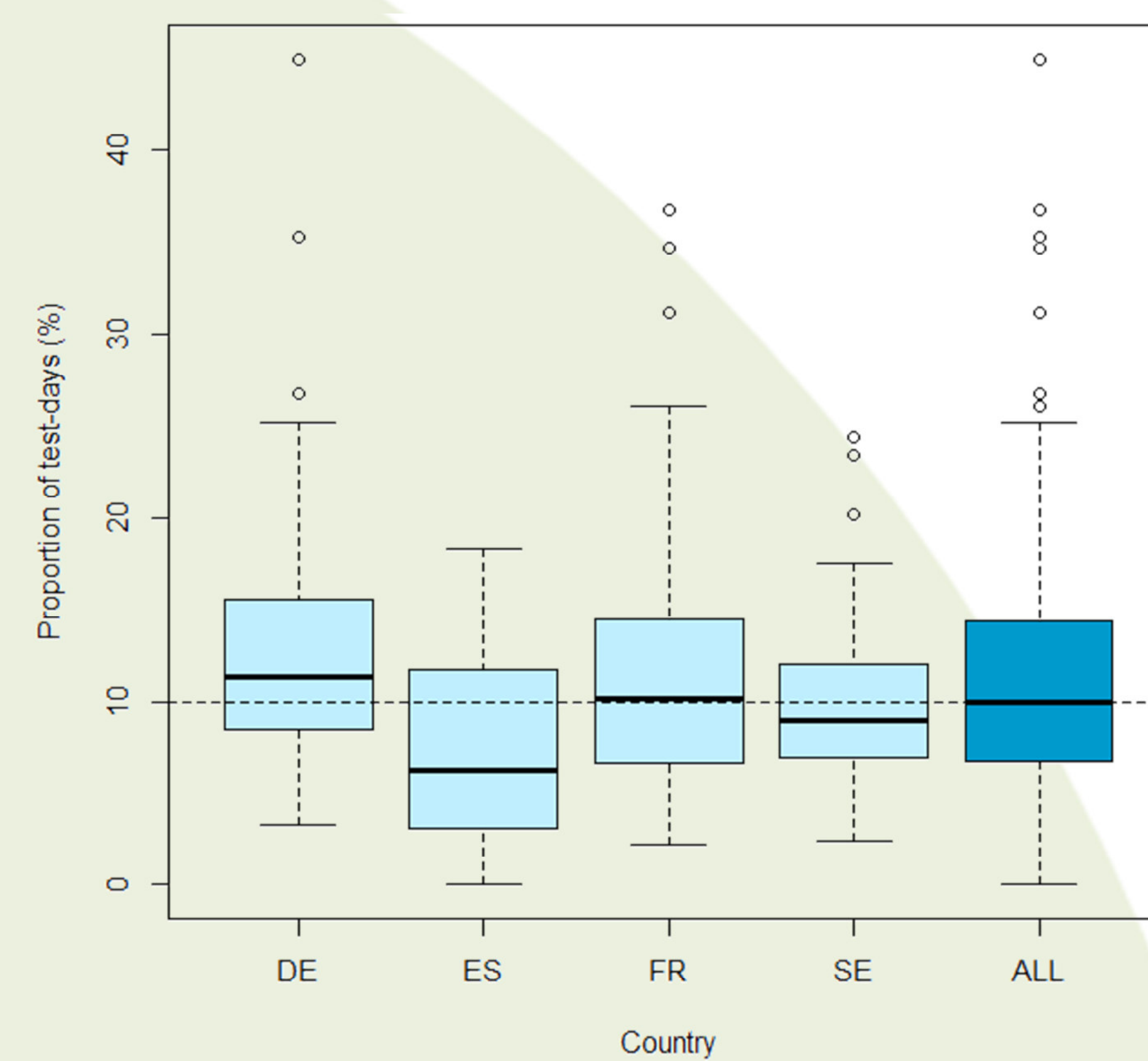


Fig. 3. Prevalence of subclinical ketosis (fat/protein ratio > 1.5 in first 100 d of lactation)

CONCLUSION: In terms of production diseases there is a large variation amongst organic dairy farms in Europe with a considerable proportion of farms not meeting the aim of good animal health and welfare. The results call for new, improved strategies to achieve the aim, including regular monitoring of the animal health status, evaluation and farm-specific intervention.