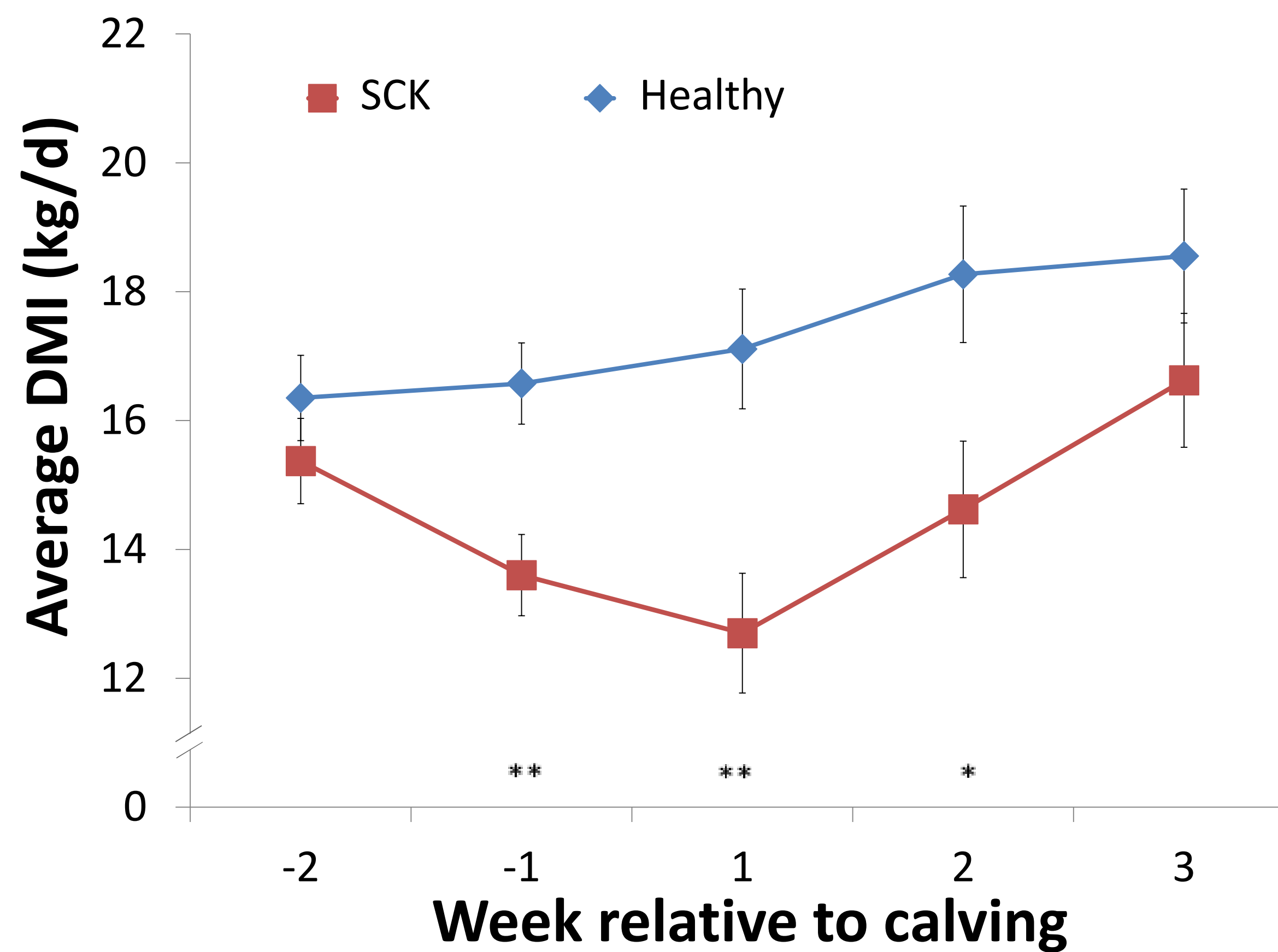


Managing the vulnerable transition cow

About 30 to 50% of all dairy cows succumb to some form of illness in the first month after calving

Can changes in behaviour identify cows at risk of disease?

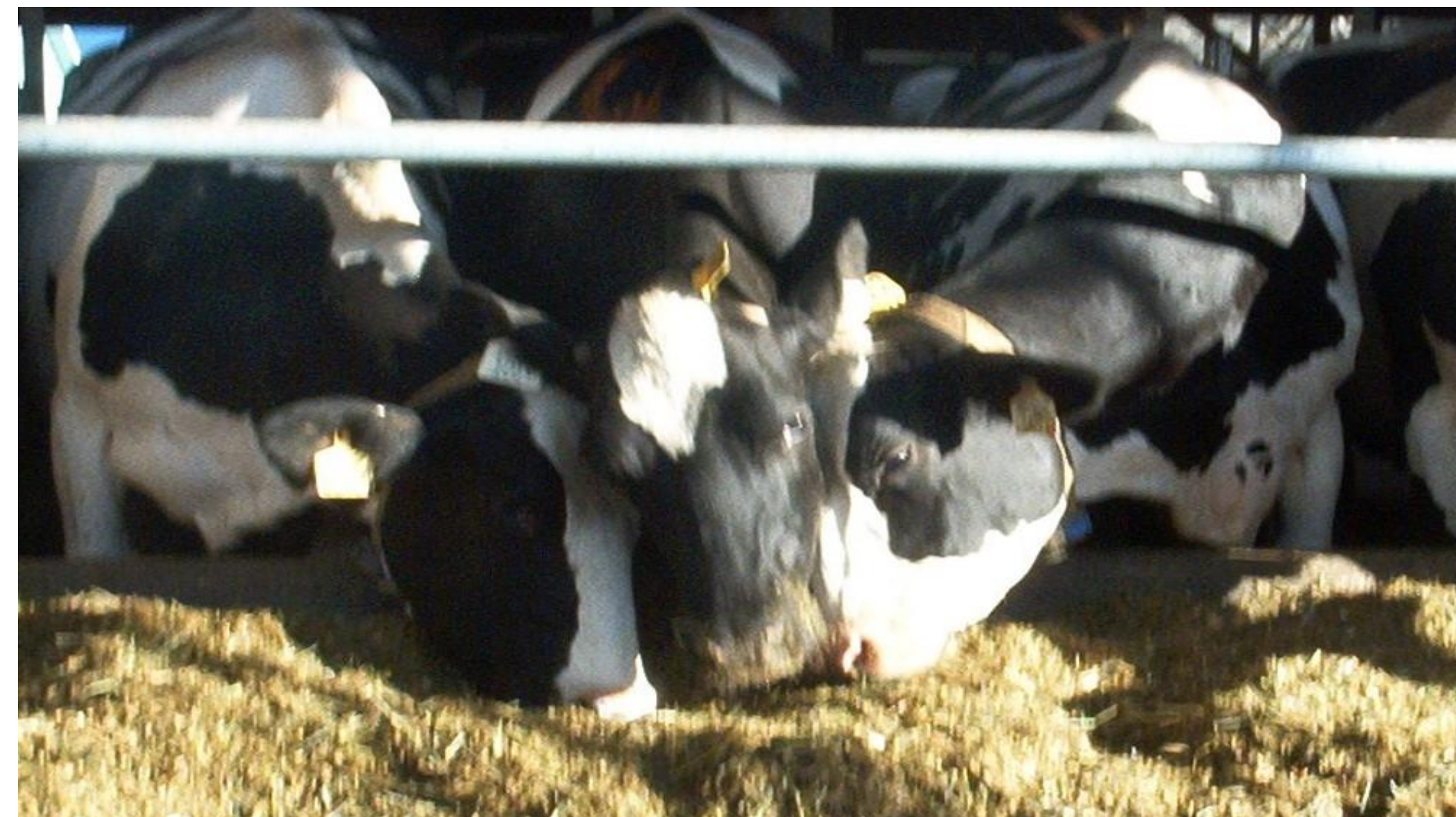


Cows that eat less in the close-up period are a greater risk:

- Cows that developed subclinical ketosis (SCK) in the week after calving ate less before and after calving relative to cows that remained healthy
- Cows that are at risk for getting sick tend to be socially subordinate

Goldhawk et al., 2009. JDS 92: 4971-4977.

What management factors affect feeding and social behaviour?



Overstocking at the feed bunk:

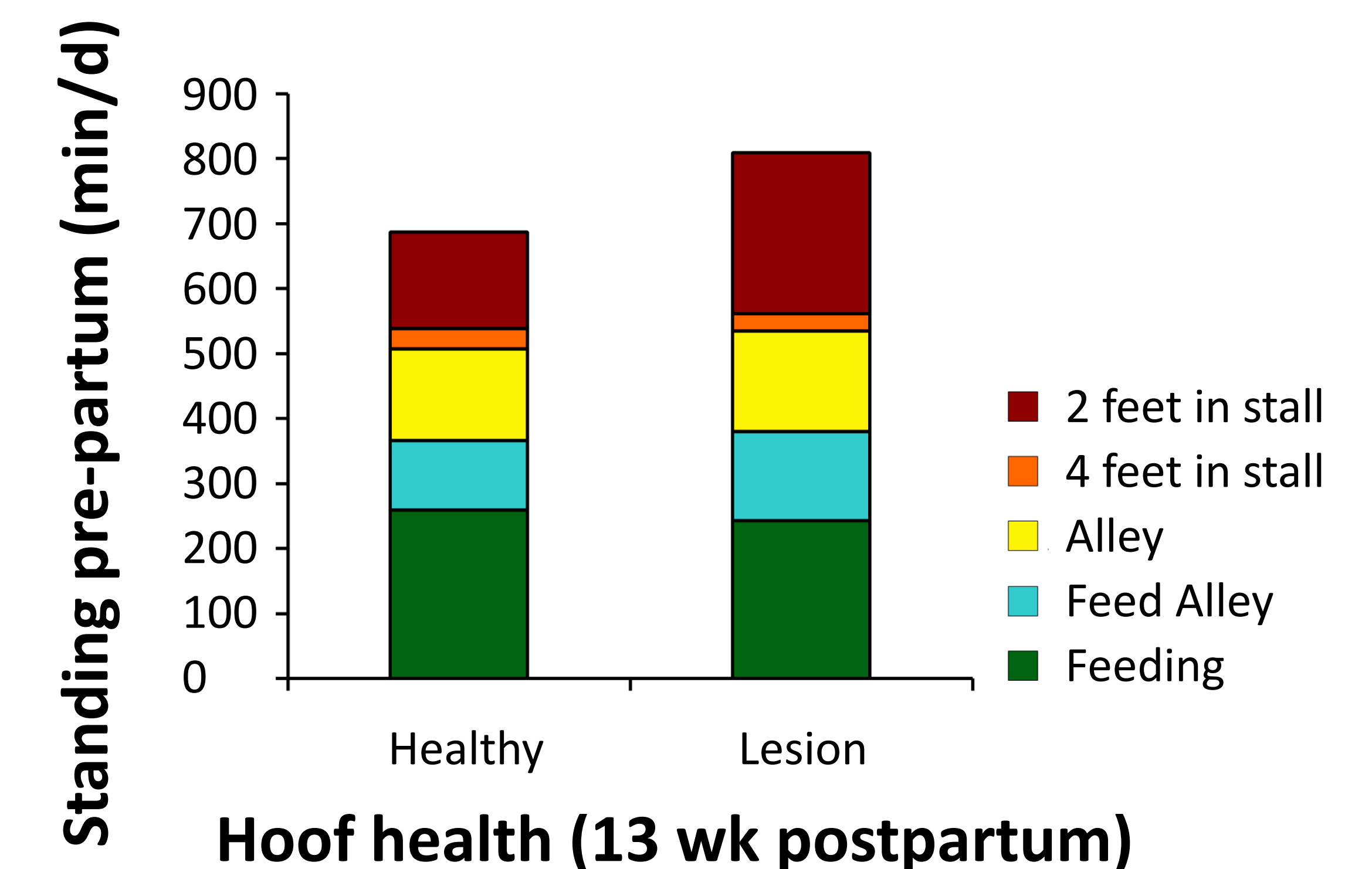
- Increases competition
- Decreases time spent feeding
- Increases time standing without eating

When moved to a new pen, cows:

- Decrease feed intake
- Reduce rumination
- Spend less time at the bunk

*Proudfoot et al., 2009. JDS 92: 3116-3123;
Schirrmann et al., 2011. JDS 94: 2312-2319.*

Is lameness a transition cow disease?



Avoid damage to the claw:

- Cows that stand more during transition are more likely to develop severe sole lesions during peak lactation
- The difference in standing time is driven by more time spent standing with only 2 feet in the stall

*Proudfoot et al., 2010. JDS 93: 3970-3978;
Dippel et al., 2011. AABS 134: 16-22.*

Take Home Messages

- Cows that consume less dry matter before calving are at risk for disease after calving
- Minimize overstocking and regrouping during the transition period
- Cows that spent longer standing with 2 feet in the stall are more likely to develop claw lesions