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Fueling The Future of Science… ISSN: 3048-8397

Bio Vet Innovator Magazine
(Fueling The Future of Science…)
Volume 3 (Issue 1) JANUARY 2026

OPEN ACCESS Review Article

Advances In Precision Livestock Farming: Integrating Digital Technologies For Smart And Sustainable Animal Production

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18275669

Received: December 12, 2025
Published: January 10, 2026

Abstract:

Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) integrates automation, sensor-based monitoring, artificial intelligence, and data analytics to optimize management of nutrition, reproduction, and animal welfare. It marks a shift from group-based to individual-animal care, emphasizing early detection, adaptive feeding, and efficient resource use. By applying intelligent systems to monitor physiological, behavioural, and environmental parameters, PLF enables informed decisions that improve productivity and sustainability. Precision feeding and nutrition refine the dietary formulation and delivery to meet specific animal needs, minimize feed waste, and enhance health. Reproductive prospective management within PLF enhances fertility monitoring, estrus detection and breeding precision through advanced sensors and predictive analytics. This paper reviews the technological foundations, sectoral applications, and challenges of PLF, with emphasis on its role in feeding efficiency, reproductive success, and system sustainability. It concludes with key insights and future research directions for integrating PLF into modern livestock production and is present as well as the future key to unlock profitable dairy farming.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Dairy production, Data analytics, feeding, IoT, Precision livestock farming, reproduction, sensors, and sustainability.

Introduction:

The livestock sector faces rising demands for animal-derived foods, stricter welfare expectations, and increasing pressure to reduce environmental impacts (FAO, 2020). Traditional production systems relying on periodic observation and average-group decision-making fall short of capturing individual animal variation and dynamic conditions (Berckmans, 2017). Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) offers a transformative alternative. It harnesses sensor networks, IoT connectivity and AI-driven analytics to continuously monitor animals and environments, enabling real-time decision support (Benjamin & Yik, 2019).

Within PLF, the two critical domains of feeding and reproduction stand out. Precision feeding adjusts diet composition and delivery in response to real-time individual metrics, enhancing nutrient utilisation and reducing waste. Reproductive prospective management monitors animals continuously, detecting subtle physiological and behavioural cues to improve breeding timing, reduce intervals and optimise fertility ultimately profitable dairy farming. These components lie at the core of sustainable livestock production as they directly affect efficiency, welfare and the environmental footprint. This review synthesises current PLF technologies and their applications, emphasising precision feeding and reproductive management, Health management and welfare and discusses challenges and future outlooks for broad adoption.

Technological Framework of PLF:

Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) operates through the convergence of several advanced technologies that transform raw biological and environmental data into actionable management decisions. At its foundation, precision livestock farming (PLF) integrates a network of sensors, Internet-enabled connectivity, and analytical tools that together form a farm-specific digital ecosystem capable of continuously monitoring animals and supporting data-driven decision making (Himu & Raihan, 2024).

- **Sensing Technologies:**
  Modern PLF uses a range of sensors wearable accelerometers, rumen boluses, RFID tags, infrared thermography, and machine-vision cameras to capture physiological and behavioural parameters such as temperature, activity, feed intake, and milk yield. Acoustic sensors detect coughing or vocal stress, indicating respiratory or welfare issues (Neethirajan, 2017).
- **Connectivity and IoT Infrastructure:**
  The Internet of Things (IoT) connects multiple devices across the farm through Wi-Fi, LoRaWAN (Long Range Wide Area Network), Bluetooth, or satellite networks, transmitting continuous data to cloud-based databases for real-time monitoring. Edge computing solutions now facilitate local processing on-farm to minimise latency and reliance on constant internet connectivity (Wolfert *et al*., 2017).
- **Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics:**
  AI models process large, complex datasets to predict disease outbreaks, reproductive events, or productivity trends. Machine-learning algorithms identify subtle behaviour deviations before visible symptoms occur (Morgan-Davies *et al*., 2023). Computer vision is increasingly used to assess gait, body condition, and feeding behaviour through video analysis (Norton *et al*., 2019).
- **Robotics and Automation:**
  Automated milking systems, robotic feeders, and cleaning robots are now common in dairy farming

and poultry sectors. These reduce labour dependency and standardise management practices, improving both welfare and hygiene (Ren *et al*., 2020).

Applications of PLF across Livestock Sector:

In dairy systems, wearable collars, rumen boluses, and automated milking sensors track health, rumination, and activity, enabling early detection of metabolic and reproductive disorders (Humer *et al*., 2018). AI platforms such as those analyzing behaviour patterns improve disease detection, reduce treatment timing, and improve overall herd performance (Neethirajan, 2020).

In contemporary poultry production, technologies such as computer vision, acoustic sensing, and environmental monitoring are widely applied to identify respiratory problems, heat stress, and other deviations in bird welfare by assessing behavioural patterns, vocal responses, and housing conditions. In addition, automated feeding and egg-collection systems contribute to higher productivity, lower labour demands, and improved biosecurity by reducing direct human interaction with animals (Depuru *et al*., 2024; Ren *et al*., 2020).

Swine operations deploy 3D cameras and feeding stations for behaviour monitoring and feed optimization. These examples illustrate the broad applicability of PLF across species and production systems.

- **Precision Feeding and Nutrition:**

  Precision feeding as part of precision livestock farming uses real-time sensor data and production measurements to tailor dietary supply for individual animals rather than relying on herd averages; these systems leverage continuous monitoring of feed intake, body weight, and behavioural data to adjust nutrient delivery according to each animal's needs (Pomar *et al*., 2019). Automatic feeders, near-infrared spectroscopy for feed composition, and in-line milk analyzers provide real-time feedback for dietary adjustment. Precision feeding reduces nutrient wastage and metabolic disorders (Norton *et al*., 2019). At a system level, this method supports sustainability by optimizing resource utilization, reducing environmental emissions and increasing economic efficiency.

- **Reproductive Prospective Management in PLF:**

  Reproductive prospective management in PLF applies data-driven monitoring to optimise fertility, estrus detection, insemination timing, and reproductive outcomes. Advanced sensors track activity changes, temperature patterns, rhythmic behaviour and hormone proxies; predictive analytics interpret these cues for breeding decision support (Benjamin & Yik, 2019). Technologies enable detection of silent heats and postpartum anestrus and improve calving intervals. Integration with genomic and production data supports genetic improvement alongside reproductive performance (Morgan-Davies *et al.,* 2023). By enhancing reproductive efficiency, PLF contributes directly to productivity, welfare, and sustainability.

- **Environmental and Waste Management:**

  Ammonia, methane concentration and temperature level can be measured by sensors within barns, enabling optimized ventilation and waste treatment. AI-based systems predict emission trends, allowing producers to adjust housing and feeding strategies to reduce environmental impact (FAO, 2020).

- **Health Monitoring and Welfare Assessment:**

  Health surveillance is a cornerstone of PLF. Continuous physiological monitoring enables early disease detection, supports targeted veterinary interventions, and reduces disease spread. Sensor-based rumination and temperature data identify subclinical disorders before symptoms appear (Benjamin & Yik, 2019). Computer vision and acoustic analytics quantify welfare indicators such as posture, coughing frequency, and behavioural deviations. Integration of these tools ensures preventive rather than reactive animal health management, minimizing antimicrobial use and improving welfare outcomes.

Key Insights and Future Outlook:

PLF signifies a paradigm shift toward data-centric, individual animal management and sustainable livestock systems. Precision feeding and reproductive prospective management highlight how digital technologies can address core efficiency and welfare challenges simultaneously. Future developments will depend on creating affordable, rugged, low-power sensors, explainable AI systems, and open-access data infrastructures. Emphasis on inclusive design will ensure smallholders and developing regions benefit from PLF. Collaborative ecosystems involving researchers, industry, and policymakers are essential to scale PLF globally and drive next-generation livestock production aligned with food security, welfare, and environmental goals.

Challenges and Limitations:

Despite proven benefits, the adoption of PLF technologies faces several constraints. Economic barriers remain a primary limitation, particularly for small and medium-scale farmers who face high investment costs and maintenance challenges (Norton *et al.,* 2019). The lack of interoperability among sensor platforms and data standards restricts integration and scalability.

Data ownership and privacy concerns continue to affect user confidence, especially when information is managed through third-party cloud systems (Benjamin & Yik, 2019). Technical issues such as power requirements, environmental resilience of sensors, and algorithmic bias also affect reliability (Hajnal *et al*., 2022). Overcoming these challenges requires region-specific technological design, open-access data systems, and targeted capacity building for farmers and veterinarians.

Conclusion:

Precision livestock farming represents a critical convergence of biological understanding and digital technology for sustainable animal production. PLF enables precision feeding, reproductive optimization and holistic health monitoring by leveraging sensors, connectivity, AI, and analytics. The adoption of PLF offers pathways to improved productivity, welfare, and environmental stewardship. Realizing its full potential requires attention to affordability, integrative data systems, and user-centered deployment. When implemented effectively, PLF can underpin resilient, sustainable, and profitable livestock farming / systems of the future.

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