

RESEARCH PAPER

## Important elements in farm animal-assisted interventions for persons with clinical depression: a qualitative interview study

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**Purpose:** The main aim of this study was to obtain participants' own experience of a farm animal-assisted intervention, and what they perceived as important elements in relation to their mental health. **Method:** A qualitative study, inspired by a phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective was conducted. Eight persons with clinical depression who had completed a 12-week farm animal-assisted intervention at a dairy farm participated in thematic interviews between May and June 2009. **Results:** The intervention was regarded as a positive experience for the participants. The analyses revealed that central elements in the intervention were the possibility to experience an ordinary work life, but also the importance of a distraction to their illness. Furthermore, the flexibility of the intervention made it possible to adjust the intervention to the participants' shifting reality and was thereby a key element in farm animal-assisted intervention. The flexibility and adapted work tasks were important elements that the participants associated with their experience of coping. A model showing the interaction between the different elements reported as important by the participants was constructed. **Conclusions:** This study shows that a farm animal-assisted intervention could be a supplement in mental health rehabilitation. All the elements in our model could possibly influence positively on mental health.

**Keywords:** Depression, farm animal-assisted intervention, Green care, mental health

### Introduction

Lifetime prevalence of clinical depression in six European countries is calculated to 12.8% [1], for Norway the numbers are between 8% and 18% [2,3]. A World Health Organization

### Implications for Rehabilitation

- Depression causes decreased quality of life and impairment, and in Western countries depression represents a major cause for sick leave and work disability.
- During rehabilitation, farm animal-assisted interventions may be beneficial for persons with depression.
- The possibility to experience an ordinary work setting was important for the participants, but also that the intervention acted as a distraction to their illness.
- The participants described the flexibility and possibility to experience coping as central elements in the intervention.

survey concluded that depression leads to poorer health than several chronic diseases [4] and is estimated to be the fourth leading cause of disease burden worldwide [5]. For millions of people suffering from depression the illness causes decreased quality of life and impairment, thereby representing a major cause for sick leave and work disability [6]. A wide range of treatments, therapeutic interventions and healthcare pathways is needed to counteract the comprehensive impact of depression.

In Europe, a new complementary intervention has developed within the agricultural sector in the last decades. Different expressions like Green care, Care farming or Social farming all include a variety of work-related activities offered at ordinary farms. All parts of the farm are used, creating a diversity of interventions. The common basis is the use of nature and the natural environment to improve or promote health and well-being [7]. Farm animals are an important part

of the Green care milieu at most farms, and a farm animal-assisted intervention could be described as an intervention where the participants work and contact with farm animals are in focus. Today, approximately 650 farms in Norway offer a Green care service [8], and similar figures are seen in several other European countries [9].

A study from England showed a significant increase in self-esteem and mood (including decrease in depression) for participants within Care farming [10], and a Norwegian study shows that nature-based interventions at farms could be effective for depression [11,12]. The results of a focus group study from Green care farms in The Netherlands [13] indicate that an increase in self-confidence due to a feeling of being useful and the social setting were the most important aspects for participants with mental health issues. Similar findings were seen in a Norwegian interview study [14], where the farmer's commitment and conduct were emphasized as important together with the social setting at the farm.

A new interest for animals' possible beneficial effects on human health has developed the last decades. Reviews and meta-analysis have revealed a positive result of animal-assisted interventions with pets on human health in general [15], and for depression in particular [16]. In contrast to animal-assisted interventions with pets, there are a limited number of studies related to farm animals and the possible effect on mental health issues. A randomized controlled study including persons with different mental illnesses working with farm animals reported a significant decline in state anxiety and an increase in self-efficacy in the intervention group compared with the control group 6 months after the intervention [17,18]. The authors [19] also showed that among persons with affective disorders, increases in intensity and exactness in performed work tasks were significantly correlated to increase in self-efficacy and decrease in state anxiety.

Several mechanisms may explain the possible beneficial effects of farm animal-assisted interventions on participants with depression. Ulrich [20] has emphasized the relationship among nature, reduced stress and health, and Green care and farm animal contact could very well fit into this theoretical framework. First, several studies have described a decline in levels of stress hormones (cortisol, adrenalin and noradrenalin) when people interact and have physical contact with pet animals [21–23]. At the same time, the beneficial substance oxytocin is reported to increase in humans when interacting with pet animals [24,25]. Second, Green care and farm animals could very well act as an arena for coping experiences and enhanced self-efficacy. The latter is described as a person's belief that one can successfully achieve the desired outcome [26]. According to this theory, several sources are basis for a person's belief in own efficacy. Both information from a person's milieu and own cognitions and physiological state act as sources for self-efficacy belief, but the most influential source to improved self-efficacy is when a person complete a task or cope with a situation. A low generalized self-efficacy is correlated with both depression and anxiety [27], and a study showed that high self-efficacy at baseline predicted less depression at follow-up [28]. Also social support is recognized as a

buffer against stress and as an important part of mental health interventions [29] and is seen to be negatively correlated with depression [30]. In a farm animal-assisted intervention, it could be expected that both the farmer and the farm animals may offer an experience of social support.

No qualitative study has to our knowledge focused particularly on farm animals within Green care. This focus is interesting both due to the possibility to make comparisons with animal-assisted interventions with companion animals and to clarify farm animals' function. It may also contribute to create a connection between perceived benefits and possible mechanisms involved.

### Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the participants' own experiences of a farm animal-assisted intervention and what they perceived as important elements in relation to their mental health.

## Materials and methods

### Participants

A purposive sample of 10 persons who had completed a farm animal-assisted intervention on dairy farms in 2008 or 2009 was recruited through letter of invitation. Inclusion criteria for the intervention was clinical depression, confirmed by a Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview [31] and/or a Beck Depression Inventory score of minimum 14 [32]. Two participants did not want to attend the study, but seven women and one man between 25 and 54 years of age accepted the invitation. Background variables for each participant are described in Table I.

A first visit was used by the participants to get familiar with the farm and the farmer. When they returned the next time the participants worked together with the farmer, performing on their own choice ordinary work tasks in the cow shed, such as grooming, mucking, feeding, taking care of the calves and milking. They could also choose to spend their time in physical contact with the farm animals. The intervention lasted for 12 weeks and the participants attended the farm twice a week. Six farms in five counties in Norway were recruited, all located close to towns. Both female (three) and male farmers (three) had the main responsibility for the participants. The range of dairy cows at the farm was from 14 to 60; all farms also had companion animals such as horses, cats, dogs or rabbits.

Table I. Background variables on the participants.

Participant's number in the study (used in quotes)	Gender	Age	Work situation
1	Female	36	Disability pension
2	Female	51	Rehabilitation
3	Male	54	Disability pension
4	Female	27	Rehabilitation
5	Female	27	Rehabilitation
6	Female	51	Rehabilitation
7	Female	25	Out of work
8	Female	30	Rehabilitation

### Design and data collection

A qualitative study, inspired by a phenomenological-hermeneutical perspective, was conducted based on individual thematic interviews. The qualitative data were obtained by accomplishing individual thematic interviews that were audio-taped. The interviews, lasting between 16 and 51 min, were conducted by the first author in the period between May 2009 and July 2009. The time period from intervention to interview varied from 0 to 14 months. One participant was interviewed at the farm, the rest (seven) were interviewed in their homes. The interview guide was developed on the basis of earlier qualitative research within Green care [13,14], the theoretical frameworks developed within animal-assisted interventions with companion animals [33], and earlier informal conversations between the first author and the participants. The interview questions addressed relevant themes connected to the participants' experiences with a farm animal-assisted intervention, like their relationship to the farmer, the different work tasks and the animal contact, but it was emphasized from the start of the interview that these were only examples and that any other themes they wanted to bring forth were welcome.

### Ethical considerations

The research protocol, the interview guide, the information letter and the data handling procedures were approved by the Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics and the Privacy Ombudsman for Research. All participants gave a written consent prior to the interview.

### Data analysis

The transcripts were analyzed according to a modified version of systematic text condensation by Malterud [34,35]. All the authors read the transcripts independently and participated in the text analysis. Each participant was given a number during the analysis process, thereby assuring anonymity. First, all the interviews were read by the authors to get a general sense of the entire data material and to get an overall impression of the content related to the study aim. Then, the interviews were reread by the authors who independently identified units of meaning that represented the participants' experiences with the intervention. Different subthemes related to these experiences were identified by the authors, and together they discussed and decided which units of meaning belonged to each subtheme. The researchers' different professional background and lens did facilitate openness to different perspectives during the data analysis; the first author has a master in animal science, the second and third authors have their background in respectively public health science and nursing science. The first author, growing up on a farm, had practical experience with the work and the animal contact included in the interventions. The second and third authors had limited first-hand experience with farm animals, but experience within the research field of rehabilitation.

According to Malterud [34,35], an important part of the analysis is the stage where the code groups or subthemes

are condensed into new concepts which would increase our insight into the topic. This process resulted in the development of four main themes which were labelled "Being sick," "Ordinary life," "Flexibility" and "Coping," and the different subthemes were assembled into these themes. During this final step in the analytic process, the authors looked for relationships or connections between the four main themes and their subordinate subthemes, and a model was created to visualize these. Throughout the analysis, the authors returned to the interview texts to check that the evolving themes and subthemes reflected the meanings conveyed. Quotes from the interviews used in the results were translated from Norwegian to English by the first author and reviewed by the two others. The participants' number in the study is added in brackets at the end of each quote.

### Rigour

At the end of each interview, a verbal summary was done to ensure a common understanding and to help the participant to recall any forgotten aspects. There were no new themes or topics emerging from the interviews as the eight interviews took place, and saturation of the topics seemed to be achieved. The units of meaning in the text were independently identified by the authors to ensure openness and prevent premature closure with regard to themes and subthemes to pursue. After this first stage, the text analysis and the interpretation were done in a group setting to avoid one author's personal view to unduly affect the result.

### Results

The overall impression was that the intervention was regarded as a positive experience for the participants and three of them considered the intervention to be the turning point for a process toward recovery from depression. The participants generally felt very welcome during their stay at the farm, and they especially expressed that they felt their personal (illness) situations were understood and taken into account. How much the participants took part in the work tasks varied somewhat between them and during the intervention. Some of the participants initially felt insecure with regard to having contact with such big animals. However, during the intervention this changed, and all participants expressed that the contact with the animals had been a positive experience. All the participants had mental health issues that influenced their everyday life, with fluctuating good and bad periods. This influenced their participation in and their experience of the intervention. The two themes, "Ordinary life" and "Being sick," represent this experience. The two remaining themes "Flexibility" and "Coping" were described as general qualities of the intervention by the participants. In the following sections, the themes are further described.

### Ordinary life

A majority of the participants expressed that it was very important that the intervention gave them a possibility to experience

an ordinary life. To be considered as an ordinary coworker gave them a contrast to their illness, which they appreciated, and the experience of being useful was important and very positive. The different elements concerning “Ordinary life” consisted of the subthemes ordinary work, being appreciated and being a colleague.

### Ordinary work

The participants expressed that it was important and positive that the farm work was experienced as an ordinary work setting. This included having an appointment, getting out of the house and being active. This was also related to the fact that they felt they accomplished something useful and that their illness was somehow not relevant and not in focus:

It is an ordinary setting, and you get this...you experience yourself as a person again, you feel like a human being again. (7)

Almost all the participants expressed the experience of being useful as an important quality of the intervention. It was expressed in general terms but also very often linked to work tasks related to the animals or to the farmer. One participant said:

I think it is nice to do some work during the day, and I can very much do so at the farm. It is nice, doing something useful for someone. Because you do, feeding the animals for example. (7)

A majority of the participants mentioned the possibility to get out of the house and being active as a positive part of the intervention. The benefits included meeting people, being tired after job, having the opportunity of being away and having an important incitement to get out of their own home. As one said in the interview:

Just to get out of the house, because the first step is always the hardest. (2)

And another one said:

In addition to being mentally tired, to be physically tired is much better; you may sleep better and such stuff. (8)

### Being appreciated

One of the topics mentioned most frequently by the participants was the feeling of being appreciated. They emphasized that this was both due to the farm animals and the farmer. This feeling was connected to the impression of being needed; the animals needed care and the farmer needed help. This was expressed clearly by the farmer, but the participants also interpreted this from the animals behaviour. As one said:

The animals showed it of course, because they call out when you enter the cowshed and...you can see they appreciate the forage. (4)

Several of the participants also experienced appreciation, not only when feeding and caring for the animals. The opportunity to care and interact with the cows enhanced the feeling of doing something good for other living creatures which appreciated it:

They showed me that they appreciated it, when I stroked and brushed them. (4)

With regard to the farmer, the appreciation was expressed openly or was interpreted by the participant, as one said:

And he seemed very grateful for the help he got. (3)

Another one said:

They said that I helped them a lot, because when we were two milking we could share the work between us. (5)

### Being a colleague

The participants perceived themselves as a part of the workforce at the farm, feeling included and respected as an ordinary worker. Conversations did not focus on treatment or illness, but concentrated on the work tasks and everyday life at the farm. This was regarded as a different and valuable experience by the participants, and they appreciated the feeling of being a colleague and not a client, as one participant said:

We did not talk about illnesses or anything like that; we talked about all sorts of things. (3)

This was also reflected in the sharing of work tasks that the participants took part in, and one participant said:

I worked together with him, we took one half each. (8)

Another one said:

The farmer said it was so easy to work together with me, because I understood what to do, and then I did it. So we worked very well together. (5)

### Being sick

Even though it was important for the participants to experience and participate in “Ordinary life,” it was equally important that their condition and situation was understood by the farmer as a factor that should be considered. In addition, another important topic related to “Being sick” was the experience that the intervention served as a distraction from their illness and created some distance to their problems. This was expressed in different manners during the interviews and was condensed into four subthemes.

#### Considerate relations

The possibility to be open about their condition was expressed as important by several of the participants. They felt the farmer understood their situation and that they could easily express how they felt. The farmer was also sensitive with regard to the participant’s daily status. As a result, a close relationship developed, as one participant said:

I felt I could tell him and talk with him about...almost everything, actually. (8)

And another one said:

So we became very close. And I could always tell her if something were wrong or stupid or sad. (7)

### **Closeness, warmth and calmness**

All the participants did in different manners express the importance of physical contact with the animals. These contacts were achieved through cuddling, stroking, calves sucking on their fingers or just sit or stand close to animals. The positive element was expressed both due to the warmth from the animals, a sense of closeness, and their affection. As one participant said:

First I went to the calf barn and cuddled with the calves, and then my mood was elevated, .....when I am dejected I do feel lonely, totally alone in the world. And this is perhaps what changes when I am with the calves, because I give them love and in return I get closeness. (5)

Another participant said:

If I have a bad day, so ... the cows are there. It is always possible to get a little hug or ... just such small things. (7)

Contact with the animals also made a majority of the participants feel calmer. This was related directly to physical contact, but also to a peaceful feeling connected to being among the cows and to perform work tasks with them. One participant said:

It is a special tranquillity when you are in the milk parlor milking; it is ... a sort of harmony. (7)

Another one said:

With big animals, to be in, I could say sort of in their sphere, it provides calmness. (6)

And one said:

Because you feel very safe and calm, when you look after and have contact with animals. (1)

### **Forget my difficulties**

The farm work distracted some of the participants from their daily worries and tiresome rumination. It could also act as a distraction beforehand, because the participant could look forward and make plans for their stay at the farm every week. For some, it also gave an opportunity to forget physical pain, as one participant said:

When I am at the farm, it doesn't hurt, it doesn't matter ... aches, they a sort of, vanish, ... when I'm in the barn, I doesn't think, I just am. So ... I don't think on all the negative stuff ... that were there before, it just disappears. (7)

Another participant said:

I have become more attentive and aware. It must be connected to the possibility to fill my day with something different from the "internal" work. (5)

### **Kept me going**

The participants considered the intervention to help them through their difficulties both due to a sense of being

strengthened by getting more energy and as a help to endure hard periods. One participant said:

I got sort of stronger; I ... you see, my mood improved, and the days became lightened. (4)

Another participant said:

It has been very important in enduring days. (7)

As described earlier, most of the participants appreciated the feeling of being tired after participating in physical activities and work. However, several participants emphasized that the work and especially the work with the animals also gave them energy. In their previous jobs, they may have felt that they were drained of energy (resources) during a work day, whereas working with the animals had the opposite effect:

I felt that I got tired, but it offered me more than I had given, if you understand. (5)

And one said:

My energy level was much higher after a day at the farm, compared to days when I wasn't there. (8)

### **Flexibility**

The possibility to adjust their work due to their daily condition was emphasized as important by most of the participants. This was done both by alternating between work tasks and by the opportunity to adjust the total work load. Equally essential was the adapted instruction given during the training process. These adjustments were covered by a whole range of actions carried out by the farmer. One example is how the participants already from the start felt the farmer understood their situation. They felt no pressure during the intervention regarding how fast they completed the work, and it was easy for the participants to ask for help and advice. In the interview one said:

It was very clear from the beginning that you do what you want, and manage and are able to. You don't need to do anything else. (4)

Although this feeling of suitable demands was explained with regard to the farmer, the farm animals did also play an important part. This was especially emphasized concerning expectations, demands and judgments. The cows and the calves accepted hesitation and insecurity, they accepted the participants' fluctuating mood and condition, and regardless of how they performed the animals appreciated their effort. In the interview one said:

You can still have a bad day when you are in contact with animals, because the cows don't care if you are in a bad mood or if you haven't put your make up on. So you knew you could go anyway. (4)

Another participant claimed:

It's not demanding, the animals never judge you. They just appreciate what they get. (6)

This flexibility made the participants able to alternate between “Being sick” and experiencing “Ordinary life,” not only from day to day but also during one session. In addition, there was a possibility to vary among contacts with animals, performing work tasks and interacting and communicating with the farmer. The flexibility was also the basis for the last theme emerging from the results, “Coping”.

## Coping

A majority of the participants experienced coping as a central aspect at the farm. This was mainly connected to be able to accomplish work tasks, which also led to a diversity of other positive experiences described as self-confidence, independence, achieving goals and learning new skills. The participants felt they were given tasks they could manage, and this gave a positive feeling of accomplishment:

It was the work tasks, to care for the calves alone, and manage, .....all the time it was this experience of coping that builds up. It affects you. (8)

Another one said:

My self-confidence has increased after I started at the farm, because I understand that I manage things. I have been allowed to do a lot of things, and I felt I could manage them. (7)

But the coping experience was not only due to work, it was also seen in completely different matters, like in relation to managing to show up every time or in relation to getting control of the herd. As one participant said:

I have had problems with self-assertion.....so then I started to fetch the cow herd alone. I had to be firm with them, and then they listened to me. (5)

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the four main themes. In the figure, the subthemes related to “Being sick” and “Ordinary life” are placed according to whether they were identified by the participants in contrast to their illness or as consideration, comfort and distraction from their illness.

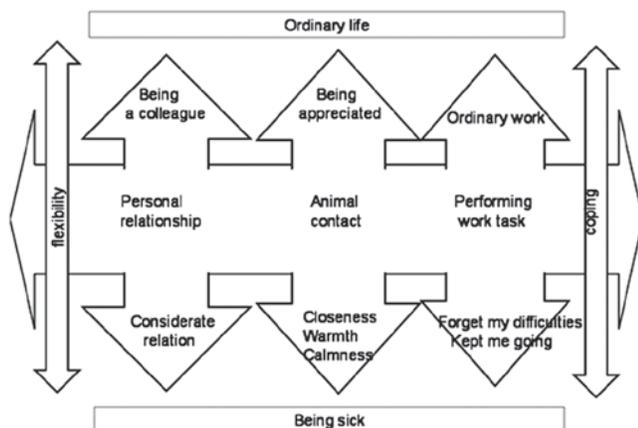


Figure 1. The model shows the four main themes as interacting elements in a farm animal-assisted intervention.

The themes “Flexibility” and “Coping” are described more as general qualities of the intervention by the participants. “Flexibility” made it possible for the participants to alternate between “Being sick” and an “Ordinary life”, not only from day to day but also during one session. In the model, “Flexibility” also has a horizontal direction, making it possible to vary among contacts with animals, performing work tasks and interact and communicate with the farmer. As delineated above, “Flexibility” was the basis for “Coping.” The experience of coping could occur at all “levels” in the intervention, from managing to show up at the farm, to an experience of being an ordinary worker in an ordinary work setting. As for “Flexibility,” “Coping” also has a horizontal direction; the participants experienced coping in all the three areas, work tasks, contact with animals and with other people. The interview guide was originally structured into the different elements which the intervention could possibly consist of. As these elements were all confirmed by the participants to be essential aspects of the intervention, this division is kept in the model, creating three vertical two-headed arrows; personal relationship, performing work tasks and animal contact.

## Discussion

One of the themes in our results is “Ordinary life,” and the possibility to be in an ordinary work setting is also emphasized as important by other authors. Liberman [36] lists a whole range of positive implications of activities in an ordinary work context for persons with mental illnesses. It provides purpose and function in daily life, possibility to interact with coworkers, self-esteem, empowerment and hope. This is seen in a study from Sundsteigen et al. [37], where daily occupation is connected to themes like meaningful occupation and to be able to manage. In another study, the participants described many positive factors in a work situation contributing to a recovery from their mental illness. Work has personal meaning, they felt needed and appreciated, and it was a source to enhanced self-esteem [38]. Statements about being useful and appreciated were frequently mentioned in this study, and also other studies have shown ordinary work and the opportunity to feel useful as important within Green care [13,39]. The possibility to perform meaningful tasks and thereby increase the experience of one’s personal value is essential in difficult life situations, and Rappe [40] emphasizes that coping experiences within Green care lead to personal empowerment. Contact among coworkers is described as an important element in these examples, and in the present study, the farmer was considered both an ordinary coworker and a considerate relation. Also other studies have found the farmer to be an important aspect within Green care [13,14], and Enders-Slegers [41] describes the relationship to the farmer as a therapeutic “tool”.

In a study, daily activities and social contact are described as important needs for persons with severe mental illnesses [42], and distraction from illness together with support and understanding was found to be important themes during work rehabilitation [43]. The main theme “Being sick”

includes some of these important but more unspecific benefits of the intervention described as distraction and distance. Inactivity, withdrawal and behavioral avoidance are common consequences of depression, and a farm animal-assisted intervention could counteract this. Being active and engaging in physical work were reported as positive by the participants, and physical activity is found to be beneficial in depression [44]. Having an appointment was emphasized as important by the participants, and absorption in activities could protect against rumination and disturbing thoughts and lead to less depressive symptoms [45,46]. This behavioral activation could also act as positive reinforcement and training of social skills [47,48], and engagement in pleasant activities could alleviate depression [49–51].

The participants in the present study contributed in an ordinary work setting on their own premises, which was made possible by the flexibility of intervention. Meeting each participant's individual needs is a fundamental pillar in mental health rehabilitation [36], and flexibility made it possible to adjust the intervention to the participants' shifting reality between "Ordinary life" and "Being sick". The flexibility also protected the participants from the experience of failure, and thereby gave them a continuing opportunity to experience coping. Within mental health rehabilitation, coping experiences are essential because the participants could have a great deal of ambivalent thoughts and negative expectations about a positive change in their illness.

Even though many positive experiences are described, dealing with stressful situations is an issue in mental health rehabilitation and vocational activities for persons with mental illnesses [52–55]. This was not mentioned as a problem at all by the participants in this study. The flexibility of interventions could create this stress-free milieu, but also a calming effect of animal contact should be considered. In many studies with stress-inducing tasks, a possible calming effect of companion animals was investigated [23,25,56–63]. Decline in heart rate, blood pressure and hormones connected to stress (cortisol, adrenalin and noradrenalin) was seen in several of these studies and also an increase in oxytocin, which has been found to be released as a result of positive social interactions, including touch and warmth [64]. Calmness, warmth and closeness were some of the descriptions the participants in this study provided about animal contact, and it is possible that physiological changes could be part of the reason for this perception. This positive contribution to the participants' mental state could be important in a process leading to a decrease in depressive symptoms. This should be further studied.

The participants were part of a selected group, who all had completed the intervention. This could of course create a bias regarding positive experiences and affect the results toward more positive attitudes to such an intervention. The first author's preliminary understanding of important elements in the intervention could create a bias in the development of the interview guide and also limit openness to new knowledge derived from the interview text. On the other hand, a preliminary understanding can guide the analysis,

thereby improving the results, as long as the researchers are aware of their own influence. In addition, each researcher's influence on the final result was limited through the authors' different levels of experience with animal-assisted intervention and different disciplinary perspectives. Due to the gender bias in the sample and the research setting being close to cities, a transfer of our results to a general population of persons with a depression diagnosis should be done with caution.

The results from this study revealed a connection to several mechanisms possibly involved in farm animal-assisted interventions. Coping experience was seen as a central factor, probably resulting in positive changes in self-efficacy and empowerment. Social support could easily be the background for several of the subthemes in this study. An essential element of the experience of intervention as ordinary work was the appraisal and informational support from the farmer and the subtheme "considerate relation" describes emotional support with concern, listening and trust. The participants could also interpret close animal contact as social support as seen within companion animal research [65,66]. A link to companion animal research should also be considered from the subtheme "closeness, warmth and calmness", which may have a physiological explanation.

## Conclusions

The study shows that a farm animal-assisted intervention within Green care could be a supplementary intervention in mental health care and rehabilitation. The mechanisms involved may explain why this study provided a stress-free milieu for the participants and thereby a possibility to recover from depression. The results show that farm animals should be considered an important part of Green care interventions by offering closeness, warmth and calmness which is difficult to replace by other means. The farmer offers the participants both an experience of being an ordinary coworker and a considerate relation, and the farmer's attitude and commitment should be stressed as essential when planning interventions for clients with clinical depression. The experiences related to "Ordinary life" underscore the importance of preparing interventions which create a realistic working community with ordinary work tasks. Such interventions is feasible to implement because a variety of realistic but flexible work tasks already exists in small-scale farms providing possibilities of continuing coping experiences. Planning and implementing this kind of intervention involve different occupational groups and our model could be a useful tool by facilitating a common understanding in an interdisciplinary field.

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