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Linwood Clinic Hours: Mon-Fri 7am – 5pm Sat 7am – 12pm **Hwy 89 Clinic:** Mon-Sat 7am-1 pm

NOTE: BOTH CLINICS ARE CLOSED SUNDAY and NO DELIVERY SERVICE SATURDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

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APRIL 2018 NEWSLETTER

We've been noticing a lot of mange and lice on at cattle this time of year. Giving Eprinex to your milking and springing cows will clear this right up with no milk or meat withdrawal. Ivomec or Bovimectin (*Bimectin discontinued/limited supply*) will work for mange and lice on calves, heifers and stockers and it's a little cheaper but it has a meat and milk withdrawal.

ProAction Corner

Make sure you help your neighbour out! When selling a cow, either direct to another farm or to the salesbarn make sure you send her with a letter guarantee. On the letter of guarantee you must provide:

- The cow's herd management # and her NLID #
- Her meat and milk withdrawal status
- Your Premise ID
- Your signature

The Importance of Cow Comfort

What is cow comfort? Cow comfort is a function of the cow's environment. So, what can we do to improve a cow's environment and subsequently, is there an economic advantage to improving our cow environment? This newsletter will highlight some key points and conclusions from a review titled 'Economic Benefits of Improved Cow Comfort' by Rick Grant.

A little background information to start, through research we have determined over 50% of milk yield variation is due to non-dietary factors (ie. Management), therefore the environment a cow experiences day to day can affect her milk yield greatly. As you read through this article keep in mind that a typical cow wants to spend 12-14 hours/day lying down and approximately 5 hours/day eating.

Rest: Cows have a strong behavioural need to rest, they will choose to rest over eating or performing other social behaviours. This means cows will eat less just to maximize their rest time. Allowing a cow to rest at least 12 hours per day results in 2-3kg milk increase per day compared to less than 12 hours. A general rule of thumb is for every extra hour of rest a cow gets per day her milk production increases 1-2 kg/day. So if we can make her resting area more comfortable we can gain milk production.

Stall Comfort: A clean, dry and comfortable stall allows for greater resting time, improved health and improved production. When giving the choice, cows prefer the softer laying surfaces such as sand bedded stalls or deep bedded stalls. Adding additional bedding to a stall increases lying time drastically. For example adding as additional 2 lbs of straw into a stall increased a cows lying time by 12 minutes/day. This means an additional 10 lbs of straw in a stall per day increases laying time by 1 hour/day which would mean 1-2 kg more milk per day.

Case studies looking at stall renovations where the end result was a softer, larger stall have shown great economic benefits. An example of this type of renovation would be converting a mattress barn into a sand bedded barn. Most of these stall improvement renovations had a payback on investment of approximately 2 years. Some observed benefits to stall improvements are:

- Greater milk yield
- Lower turnover or involuntary cull rate
- Lower somatic cell count
- Less lameness

Feed: A cow's access and ability to eat when she wants is a huge part of her daily time budget. What we know about a cow's eating habits; she likes to eat at the same time as her herdmates, and she likes to eat early in the morning and early in the evening, she likes to eat after milking and when feed is pushed up or new feed arrives. Factors which can result in increased feed intake and subsequently increased milk production are:

- Smooth manger surface (no pitting)
- Manger height approx. 6" above standing surface
- Feed 2x/day with multiple push ups per day
- Bunk space of 24-30" per cow in freestall barns
- Area behind feed manger is at least 14 feet wide (freestall barns) to reduce competition

Remember- the more feed we can make a cow eat, the more milk she will make.

Grouping by Parity: grouping 2 years olds with older cows results in a loss of resting activity, less rumination and less milk yield in our young cows. A general figure, in a 100% stocked freestall is that we will lose 10% of our potential milk yield in our first lactation heifers.

Heat: Controlling heat stress in both our lactating and dry cows has a huge impact on cow comfort and subsequently milk production. Cows who are heat stressed, don't lay down as much and their DMI is reduced. A cow becomes heat stressed when the Temperature Humidity Index reaches 68, which can be easily reached when temperature hit 20C in SW Ontario. Avoiding heat stress in dairy cattle results in:

- Increased DMI
- Increased milk yield
- Less lameness
- Better transition period

Cow-Human Interaction: This is by far the most important cow comfort factor and one we don't often think of. Gentle and calm treatment of cattle, especially during milking can result in 4-13% greater milk yield. It costs you nothing to handle cattle in a calm and gentle manner and you could increase your milk production by up to 13%.

Overall, cow comfort (how a cow interacts with her environment) plays a huge role in milk production and subsequently the bottom line of our dairy farms. It is well worth the time to take a good look at your barn and come up with ways to improve cow comfort. It might be as simple as adding more bedding to the stalls or pushing feed up more often.