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We will provide industry-leading, reliable, knowledgeable service, in a friendly, courteous and timely manner, to benefit our clients and the communities we serve.

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

NOTE: BOTH CLINICS ARE CLOSED SUNDAY

Orders for Delivery: **call by 9:30 am at the latest** for same day local delivery Monday to Friday

24 Hour Emergency Vet Service 1-800-663-2941

OCTOBER 2014 NEWSLETTER

Holiday Hours: The clinics will be open in the morning only on Monday October 15th for Thanksgiving.

Issues standing in the way of improved cow comfort

We all see the value of cow comfort, the benefits are improved performance and increased health. Not only that, but dairy producers care for their cattle and want them to be comfortable. Many things must be considered when looking at cow comfort, including weather, air quality, handling, social interaction of animals, overcrowding, stall beds, standing, and access to feed and water. Comfort is not always easy to improve and we will highlight some of the challenges that occur when dealing with cow comfort.

1. **Stress may be viewed as “temporary”-** Even though we recognize that cows are under stress, we might believe that it is only a temporary situation and therefore allow it to exist. For example, maybe we ignore heat stress because we underestimate the amount of time cows are exposed and the impact of that “temporary” stress. We must understand that even temporary stress can have lasting effects. We must evaluate the stresses that we regard as temporary and look for ways to reduce those even as we move toward a more comprehensive solution to the situation.
2. **Management can mitigate some stresses-** For example, the stress on a herd of cattle can be reduced by scraping manure more frequently, keeping feed pushed up, using headlocks to reduce aggressive behavior. However, we must be careful that management practices that reduce stress are not used to substitute for more structural changes that prevent stress. In other words, be careful that a management change used as a “bandage” to help an existing stressor doesn’t end up creating additional stressors inadvertently.
3. **Stresses are cumulative-** It may be that cattle tolerate one stress, but when another is added to it, a breakdown occurs. Overcrowding is always worse when combined with heat stress, extra time standing in the holding area is worse when cows outnumber stalls so they have to spend more time standing in the barn, feeding to an empty bunk is worse when feed space is limited. We need to recognize the cumulative effect of stress on cattle and work to provide relief even if we haven’t seen negative impacts yet.
4. **Beware of desensitization** - when what we see daily suddenly becomes “normal”. Day after day, we may see cows perching in stalls, cows with a slight arch in their back when walking, or cows with the hair rubbed off on the back of their neck. Because we see it so often it may not seem abnormal, yet, these all indicate problems. One way to overcome this problem of abnormal becoming normal is to have an outside eye evaluate the farm and indicators of cow comfort, taking a few minutes at your next herd health is a good opportunity to use the “extra” eyes that know your farm. Remember that counting, measuring, and analyzing records can also help us “see” what our eyes may miss.
5. **We may focus on one stress and miss another-** If we place all the emphasis in one area, we may miss something else. For example, we may have comfortable stall beds, but because we overcrowd, cows don’t have enough time in them. We can put rubber mats on the parlor platforms, but not train employees in gentleness and patience. Maybe we do a great job of heat abatement in the holding pen but have cows in there too many hours a day. Balance is important.

6. **Finding a way to measure changes-** It is often difficult for the average producer to measure changes and every change made can be different. Take the time to discuss with your herd health veterinarian about a change you are thinking of and develop a method that will allow you to measure and analyze your change efficiently.
7. **Just because cows prefer it doesn't mean that it is justifiable-** We know that cows prefer to walk on rubber rather than concrete. Does that make it economical to put rubber in the parlor return lane? Does that mean that there is any positive return or lasting effect? It is important to know what you want to achieve before making an investment and to determine how you will measure whether you achieved it.
8. **There may be unintended consequences-** It is possible that drawbacks may exceed the benefits. For example, if cows stand in line to get under the grooming brush, are they spending significantly more time on their feet? Or if we increase water use for cooling in the barn, do we increase environmental mastitis? Monitor the consequences of actions.

Cow comfort is a progressive on-going process to prevent stress on cows. We don't know everything about how cows are affected by things yet. Therefore, we have the responsibility to continue to observe cow behavior, measure performance and analyze changes in an effort to strengthen this mutually beneficial relationship that we control.

Reduce lameness NOW!

Lameness in dairy cattle is a subject that continues to come under scrutiny in the dairy industry since it is a visual and is an obvious result of the cow's environment on her health. Despite progress, it is still an area that many dairy producers can make improvements in. Lameness impacts the cow in many ways including how much she eats and how much time she rests – both of which impact her milk production potential.

Welfare concerns will only increase in the coming years and the dairy industry must act now to reduce the impact of this costly problem both in terms of the negative cow and production effects but also the long term consumer reaction consequences. The good news is it is possible to maintain very low levels of lameness in high producing dairy herds by focusing on the following areas:

1. Ideally, sand is the best bedding. Sand creates more secure footing in alleys and promotes long lying bouts and fewer bouts per day. Any well maintained bedding material will also improve the ability for lame cows to rise and lie down.
2. Provide adequate time for resting. The target should be 12 hours per day as a minimum for lying time per day.
3. Have excellent hoof health management, which includes preventative routine hoof trimming and the early identification and treatment of lame cows.
4. Have an effective footbath program to assist in the control of infectious hoof disease.
5. Provide good flooring to avoid the risk of slipping, wear and trauma. This especially can be unfortunately ignored since the worsening of the footing occurs over an extended period of time.
6. Provide adequate heat abatement via proper ventilation.

Avoid these silage-sampling mistakes

Forage testing is critical to understanding the quality and nutrient content of your corn silage. Producers must avoid these common mistakes when collecting and sending corn silage samples for testing:

1. **One-stop sampling.** Important to test a representative sample of the entire feeding surface of the pile, bunker or silo. Collect multiple subsamples from the silage surface and thoroughly mix them. Then take a representative sample from the mixed subsamples to submit to the lab. Or consider submitting two or three representative samples from the mixed subsamples and average the test results.
2. **Hands down.** If you collect handfuls of silage with your palm down, kernels and other small silage particles might fall out. Keep your palm up and avoid shaking. It is best to use a scoop or pail to collect silage samples.
3. **Garbage bagging.** Save samples in zip-type plastic bags, not garbage bags. Squeeze as much air from the bag as possible before sealing. A vacuum sealer made for sealing food can be used to create an air-tight package. Keep cool or freeze a fermented sample prior to submitting to your Nutritionist. This will maintain the sample's integrity in transit.
4. **Mystery silage.** Clearly identify your shipped sample with your farm name, contact information and sample identification. Be sure to specify the analyses desired, so the lab or nutritionist doesn't need to contact you with questions that could delay results.
5. **Unsafe sampling.** Safety is foremost when gathering corn silage samples. Watch for exposure to fumes and equipment or feed entrapment.

Your feed ration determines so much of how productive and profitable your herd will be. It only makes sense that formulating the right ration depends on the proper analysis of the individual feeding components.