



DAIRYINFO

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WINTER... AND DAIRY HEIFERS!

There are numerous known advantages to having dairy heifers calve at 24 months of age. In order to achieve this goal, nutrition, environment and management are all important aspects of the equation. With the onset of winter come colder temperatures, wind, rain, snow and mud ~ all of which can have a detrimental impact on reaching the desired goal. Let's consider the importance of each part of this equation.

◆ **Nutrition:** Nutritional recommendations are based on certain assumptions: replacement heifers are clean and dry, fed ad lib, free of disease and parasites, unbred, and raised at moderate temperatures. Heifers have a base energy requirement and dietary energy density level in order to maintain targeted growth and development. This is calculated at a thermal neutral temperature of 20°C. As cold winter weather sets in, these energy-related requirements increase. If bodily requirements are not met, the heifer will begin to suffer the effects of cold stress, which is most typically seen as a decrease in daily weight gain. Rations fed to dairy heifers throughout winter months need to reflect this need for additional energy. Furthermore, sufficient feed and forage must be provided to meet a naturally-occurring increase in dry matter intake.

◆ **Environment:** While we cannot regulate climatic conditions, it is possible to provide an environment that will reduce the impact of cold stress on dairy heifers. Exposure to wind increases both heat loss and the potential for cold stress, as does exposure to snow, rain, mud and manure. Heifers that are maintained in clean, dry quarters, and out of direct exposure to wind and the elements can withstand relatively cold temperatures. Good ventilation is, however, necessary. Heifers that are weighted down with mud and manure will not be able to sustain maintenance requirements, let alone achieve optimum growth. While a ration may provide ideal levels of energy, housing and environmental conditions must also be carefully considered, with appropriate changes and adjustments implemented. Together, these factors will help to influence the growth and development of quality replacement dairy heifers that calve at or before 24 months of age.

◆ **Management:** Properly managing your heifers is critical to the future of your lactating herd. The impact of winter weather, along with proactive attention to nutrition and environmental conditions can make a difference in how these heifers will perform in the future. Be sure to consider such management aspects as available bunk space, overcrowding, age/size of heifers

and how they are grouped, the availability of clean water, bedding, a good vaccination program and many more factors. Paying attention to these things will help you raise healthy, productive heifers and impact your future lactating herd.

(Edited from an article by Patrick Hoffman, University of WI-Madison)

Planning for Next Year's Crops?

There are a few things to consider as you plan next year's crops. Planning ahead can help to make the most of available savings, while projecting the forage needs of your entire herd for 2016.

- ◆ Feed shortages ~ if you have a shortage of one feed and a surplus of another, paying attention to acreage and yields needs to be considered, along with long-term changes in feed rations to meet soil production capabilities. This requires careful evaluation.
- ◆ Efficient use of nitrogen ~ you may need to rely on substantial off-farm nitrogen sources in the third (or later) year of corn-on-corn acreage. It might be an economic advantage to rotate your crops in shorter than 3-year periods. The use of hay crops or soybeans can help to reduce the need for external nitrogen needs, while avoiding pest buildups as well.
- ◆ Corn rootworm pressure ~ when corn rootworm pressure develops into a serious, ongoing problem requiring the continual application of an insecticide, crop rotation should be considered to limit the buildup of these pests. Shorter rotations can help reduce the need for insecticides, therefore helping to reduce corn rootworm populations.
- ◆ Inconsistent corn performance caused by drought stress ~ in areas where drought stress has limited yields and profitability, rotating corn with more drought-tolerant crops can provide a more stable and diverse crop mix. Rotated corn is more drought-tolerant in fields where corn-on-corn has been planted.
- ◆ Poor performance of no-till corn ~ low performance of no-till corn may be caused by a number of factors. No-till planting can become more difficult in later years of long corn rotations (3-years or longer) due to heavier amounts of residue, increased weed problems and compacted soils. Using no-till on first-year fields can help to avoid many of these problems.

As you plan for 2016, consider your forage goals and needs, along with appropriate crop rotation. I'll be happy to review your needs and concerns, as we move slowly toward spring.

Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call us!

Our goal is to help you. That's our W-S Feed commitment!

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SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Merry Christmas!

*Wishing you & yours
the best this Christmas!
Thank you for your
business and support
this past year. It is my
pleasure to work with
you... and to be part
of your team!*

It's getting mighty cold these days

If your cows could sing, would they celebrate the Holidays with a song like this: "The weather outside is frightful... but our stalls are so delightful"? Winter weather brings cold and often damp, wet conditions. Whether your cows are in a free stall facility or in tie stalls, the environment in which they live is critical to their health and ability to produce at an optimum level. Take time to evaluate your facility this winter before the cold really sets in. The goal of this evaluation is to ensure your cows are in a draft-free, well-ventilated building with clean, dry bedding. Cows can handle cold weather, as long as they are kept comfortable and well-fed! Wet conditions in a facility can also contribute to air quality concerns, which may lead to health-related problems, particularly respiratory disease. This winter, keep your cows' well-being in mind. They are, after all, an essential part of the farm. When cows are comfortable – they will perform time after time! It might not seem like much, but cow comfort is worth your time and their well-being. And if they could sing, they would serenade you with carols of contentment... and the pleasant sounds of making more milk.



**RENAISSANCE
NUTRITION**



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Taking service to another level



DECEMBER 2015

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

CHECK IT OUT!