



DAIRYINFO

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Taking service to another level!

It's Time to Think Winter!

Now that most farms have completed the harvest, dairy producers need to be thinking about winter. They should be looking at their facilities and equipment in advance of the onset of winter weather, to be sure the systems are ready to deal with the extremes of winter and provide the best possible winter environment for livestock. The occasional rainy days in fall provide an ideal time to look over your entire livestock operation and take any corrective actions necessary. Here are a few things to check out on those rainy days.

Many smaller dairies still use tie stalls, which can provide nice, comfortable working conditions for people during cold weather. However, those same conditions may be detrimental to cows in winter. Without talking about ventilation rates, all your equipment needs to be in good working condition. Fan blades should be clean for easy airflow. Louvers designed to prevent cold air inflow can also restrict warm, moist air exhaust if they are dirty and bent and cannot open, or are blocked in any manner. Clean fans and motors will run cooler and more efficiently. A dirty fan may have its airflow capacity reduced by 40%.

Proper ventilation is really more about air inlets and air distribution than it is about exhaust fans. Especially for winter ventilation, air distribution needs to be uniform around the dairy barn so dead air spots with high moisture content don't develop.

Air inlets come in a wide range of designs. It makes little difference what system you use as long as it provides enough fresh air distribution throughout the barn. Be sure air passages are not blocked by dust, feed, collapsed ducts or dead critters that have collected over the seasons.

Winter ventilation means keeping the air as dry as possible, in any/all dairy barn(s). While warmer air does hold more moisture, it is not enough reason to close the building up to keep it warmer. Extra moisture in the air increases the risk of respiratory problems in cattle. Minimum fans and air inlets need to be operating at all times to keep moisture moving out of the barn. To prevent problems with air restriction, continuously running fans should have louvers removed. If the louver isn't there, it can't get dirty and slow air exchange.

Continuous fans don't need thermostats, while other types of fans are usually on thermostats, turning them on as needed. Contact points in thermostats corrode easily when they aren't being used regularly. Check that thermostats are clean and their contacts are working properly. Replace thermostats that simply won't work after routine cleaning.

The most common housing today is a freestall barn, and usually that is a cold barn. Cows can be productive at temperatures well below -6° C, if they are kept dry and sheltered from harsh winds. There are some common mistakes with a freestall operation, which should be avoided. These mistakes include:

- **Limiting ventilation to prevent waterers from freezing.** Find other ways to keep the water running. A

barn closed up enough to keep water running will often be a barn with respiratory problems in the winter.

- **Limiting ventilation to keep manure from freezing.** Manure may freeze in the coldest part of the winter, but your cows are much better off if you prepare some alternatives for manure handling rather than keeping it warm in the barn so the manure won't freeze.
- **Limiting ventilation to prevent drafts.** Cold, naturally-ventilated barns depend on airflow to keep moisture moving out of the barn. If the barn houses younger livestock that need extra protection consider additional bedding and/or positive pressure ventilation systems that help maintain air quality in pens, when building air exchange is limited.

Curtain barns are intended to restrict some airflow in cold times without cutting off all airflow. Let the barn work the way it is intended. While it may be tempting to close down the open ridge of a naturally-ventilated barn, that open ridge is what keeps the barn dry. Warm, moist air needs a place to escape, and that place is the open ridge. Cold freestall barns are intended to operate about 5-10 degrees warmer than the outside temperature.

If the weather becomes extreme and you feel you have to cut down the air exchanges, it would be better to put restrictions on the sidewall inlets (at the eave level). Do not close them entirely, however, or you will prevent proper airflow out the ridge. If the inside temperature of the barn is 10+ degrees higher than the outside temperature, you are probably shutting the airflow down too much.

If your barn's side walls are controlled by curtains, this is a good time to unroll the curtains for inspection. Look for tears and holes caused by rodents. Are all the mechanics working properly? If you have an automatic system, see that it opens and closes properly. If you have a manual system, open and close your sides as well. If lubrication is called for, this is the time to do it.

Are the eave openings on your barn continuously open or are they variable? Look at how you can close them part way if an extreme cold spell calls for some air inlet restriction.

Also, it is far easier to check and repair a heater element in a waterer now... than in December/January; check the heating elements and the wiring to be sure all wires are well-insulated and the system is properly grounded, preventing stray voltage problems through the waterers. Winter ventilation [in any dairy barn and for all groups] means keeping the air as dry as possible, while ensuring good circulation and air exchange. Get ready for winter... before it comes!

**WINTER IS COMING! ARE YOU PREPARED?
DETERMINE FORAGE & FEED INVENTORIES
CHECK & WINTERIZE ALL EQUIPMENT
W-S FEED... *quality & service!***

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

Our goal and commitment is to help you!

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CONSIDER THIS...

In cold weather it is necessary to feed more energy to calves in order to meet their higher energy needs for maintenance. Once the environmental temperature drops below 15°C, the calf has to increase its metabolism in order to maintain its body temperature. A calf housed at an environmental temperature of -4°C requires roughly 30% *more energy* for maintenance than one housed at 10°C. In extremely cold weather (<-17°C), sick calves are at great risk due to potentially reduced feed and energy intake, coupled with limited body reserves of energy.

To maximize the growth rate of young calves we need to supplement nutrient intake during cold weather, thereby increasing the animal's ability to generate and maintain its body heat. To ensure your calves are getting enough milk replacer on cold winter days, and to review your entire calf raising program this coming winter and in the future, call me today! Together we can make a difference in your future herd, while helping to reduce some of the stress throughout the coming winter months!

GROWING RESULTS!

The harvest is complete for this year, with the field equipment - planters, cultivators and harvesters – tucked into sheds and sheltered areas waiting the next planting season. Fields that were recently filled with stalks and beans now lay bare, soon to be covered with frost and snow, as they rest for the coming months. It is time to start planning for the 2015 growing season and determining what hybrids are a "best-fit" for your operation. We recommend that you plant more than one hybrid, due to the variability of soil and climatic conditions. W-S Feed offers outstanding hybrids that are research-tested for results, giving your livestock quality nutrition with every mouthful. Growing quality forages starts with selecting hybrids and seed products that can maximize nutrition and digestibility. Ask about our lineup of seed and agronomy products! Take advantage of any available early order discounts and ensure you will be planting top-quality next year. Also, be sure to ask about our line of forage preservatives and inoculants! Check it out. Aim for results in 2015 with W-S Feed. Call today and order soon!



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Consider This...

Growing Results!

CHECK IT OUT!