



# DAIRYINFO

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*Taking service to another level!*

## **A BREATH OF FRESH AIR**

Winter has “officially” started and with it many air quality-related concerns that dairy animals of all ages may come up against. Young calves may have the greatest challenges in the weeks to come. As dairies increasingly turn to housing young calves indoors, versus outdoor hutches and pens, ventilation, as it relates to animal health, will become a key consideration. Outdoor calf hutches, of course, have served well and provide ample ventilation. Their exposure to weather, however, can result in stress on calves and extra labor for dairy workers. Also, calf hutches do not facilitate use of automated feeders.

As more and more dairies consider the use of calf barns with individual stalls to help reduce labor costs, they also appreciate this as a solution for providing a more comfortable environment for calves. These barns typically are designed with natural ventilation that may be regulated somewhat, depending on the weather conditions.

Research from the University of Wisconsin by Dr. Ken Nordlund, has found though that even in well-ventilated barns, the individual [calf] stalls can become badly polluted microenvironments, harboring airborne pathogens. Research shows airborne bacterial counts in naturally ventilated barns can be significantly higher than those outdoors, and counts within individual calf pens can reach levels dramatically higher levels than in the rest of the barn. Most of the bacteria species isolated in these studies are non-pathogenic, but Dr. Nordlund’s research results would indicate that lower total airborne bacterial counts are associated with reduced prevalence of respiratory disease in barns. A high total bacterial count can serve as an indicator of poor ventilation, and because calves spend 100% of their time in the pens, their exposure to the air within the microenvironment is continuous and chronic.

Dairies frequently overlook or underestimate the incidence of BRD in calves, Nordlund says. They use appetite as an indicator, but in limit-feeding systems the calves are hungry and take their feed readily. Research from fellow UW veterinarian Dr. Sheila McGuirk, using a clinical scoring system and ultrasound diagnostics, has shown higher rates of BRD in dairy calves than most would suspect.

So if bacterial counts reach high levels even in barns with ample natural ventilation, what can be done to reduce them? The answer lies in improving ventilation to the individual calf pens, and without a risk of cold drafts, which would be adverse to good growth, health and development. Dr. Nordlund has worked with numerous dairies, assisting in the design and use of such things as ventilation tubes. The positive-pressure ventilation tubes are designed to drive fresh air into individual pens, he explains.

These are a new generation of ventilation tubes, not the positive-pressure re-circulating tube systems of the 1980s. The goal of these systems is to provide a continuous, gentle supply of fresh air to the calf without creating a chilling draft.

Reducing levels of airborne bacteria at calf level is critical in indoor calf barns. It can do a world of good in decreasing the risk of respiratory problems in your calves. Healthy calves with good growth rates are tomorrow’s productive herd.

There are numerous possibilities to consider. Be sure to talk with your Renaissance consultant for more information and suggestions that can help your calf raising program. This is an investment in your future herd, while encouraging improved productivity and profitability.

*(Edited from an article by John Maday, Editor, Drovers Network)*



## **SPRING IS COMING!**

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**THE TEAM FOR RESULTS**

**SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

# Starting the New Year...

Making the most of livestock nutrition, rations and management is a daily necessity. You need to ensure livestock get what they need... when they need it! Good nutrition helps to maintain good body condition and health, while working toward improving productivity and profitability. Here are a few things we offer...

- ❖ Comprehensive dairy programs/products
- ❖ Beef programs/products: cow/calf, feedlot
- ❖ Swine programs/products
- ❖ Poultry products
- ❖ Equine products
- ❖ Sheep & Goat products
- ❖ Nutritional support
- ❖ Agronomy support
- ❖ Quality, tested corn hybrids, alfalfa, small grain and grasses... and much more!

## THE PIPES ARE FROZEN!

Winter is here and the pipes are frozen! Most of the farm machinery works, but with agonizing moans and groans! It's difficult for us to venture outside into the cold, enveloped in thermal underwear and multiple layers to shield ourselves and looking more like an abominable snowman than a human being. There seem to be even more chores to accomplish. What about calves and young stock? They need to be warm, dry, clean and ventilated. This includes the location of calf housing, bedding, feed and water, and the possible use of calf blankets. In winter, calf housing is best with a protected southern exposure with the back to the north. It needs to be located in an area with good drainage, avoiding wet conditions during times of thaw and rain. It is important to provide adequate, clean and dry bedding at all times. Use of calf blankets, particularly on calves less than 3 weeks of age is important, offering calves an "extra coat" that traps body heat and insulates them against the elements. W-S Feed has access to calf blankets, available for large breed calves, as well as smaller breeds such as Jerseys. A sound nutrition program, including a quality milk replacer (adjusted intakes for temperature changes) and a good starter feed are also critically important. Proper care of calves will make a positive difference to your future herd. Additionally, a little extra care and attention to your entire herd can impact their productivity and your profitability. Stay warm and keep both you and your herd as comfortable as possible!



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*New Year 2014*

**January 2014**  
**A Breath of Fresh Air**  
**The Pipes Are Frozen!**  
**Starting the New Year...**  
**CHECK IT OUT!**