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*Taking service to another level*

### ***It's Time to Think Winter!***

Winter is here and hopefully you had time to look at facilities and equipment well before the arrival of its cold, wet and winds! The goal is to provide the best possible winter environment for your livestock. Here are a few things to keep in mind as winter progresses.

Many small dairies still use tie stall barns. These buildings provide nice, comfortable working conditions for you during cold weather, but those same conditions may be detrimental to the cows. Without even talking about ventilation rates, all equipment needs to be in proper 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, bent so they don't open, or blocked in any manner. Make sure fans are cleaned, so the motor will run cooler and more efficiently. A dirty fan may have its airflow capacity reduced by 40%.

Proper ventilation is almost 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 sufficient 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 in any dairy barn is all about keeping the air as dry as possible. While warmer air does hold more moisture, it is not enough reason to close the building up to keep it warmer. That extra moisture in the air is what causes many respiratory problems. A minimum number of fans and air inlets need to be operating at all times to keep moisture moving out of the barn. To prevent some problems with air restriction, continuously running fans should have louvers taken off. If the louver isn't there, it can't get dirty and slow air exchange. Continuous fans don't need thermostats, but other types of fans are usually on thermostats to turn them on as needed. Contact points in thermostats corrode easily when they aren't being used regularly. Check that all thermostats are clean and their contacts are working properly. Replace thermostats that simply won't work after routine cleaning.

A more common housing option today is a freestall barn and usually these are cold barns. Cows can be productive at temperatures well below -7° (C) if they are kept dry and sheltered from harsh winds. Ventilation in freestall barns is sometimes mismanaged during freezing weather.

Common mistakes to avoid include:

- ***Limiting ventilation to prevent waterers from freezing.*** Find other ways to keep water running. A barn that is warm enough to keep water running may be a barn with the potential for respiratory problems in the winter.
- ***Limiting ventilation to keep manure from freezing.*** Manure may freeze for a few days during the coldest part of the winter, but your cows are much better off if you prepare some alternatives for the manure handling.
- ***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 needing extra protection, consider some sort of plywood partitions that limit airflow within these pens, but not through the entire building. 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, the open ridge is what helps to keep 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 between 5 and 10 degrees warmer than the outside temperature. If the weather becomes extreme and you feel you have to cut down air exchange even a little, 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 more than 10 degrees higher than the outside temperature, you are probably shutting the airflow down too much.

Additionally, be sure to check the eave openings on your barn to see if they are continuously open or if they are variable. Look at how you can close them part way, if an extreme cold spell calls for some air restriction. Always keep in mind safety around the farm – from icy walkways to faulty wiring and improperly insulated wires, heating elements and more. Make this a safe and productive winter – regardless of the cold, wet weather of winter!

*(Edited from article by C. Schwartau, U of MN Extension)*

## **SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS!**

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**VOLUME 3 – Number 1 – January 2013**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR 2013**

# Happy New Year! A LONG WINTER'S REST...

We have turned the calendar on a New Year, one that is filled with opportunities, potentials, challenges and changes. This is a good time to take a few moments for reflection and renewal. We cannot change what has past... good or bad. However, we can look ahead with confidence, committed to making things better. Each day will bring its own set of possibilities, opportunities and concerns. We live one day at a time, giving thanks for our faith, our family and our friends ~ blessings that are given to encourage us today and every day. May this be a year filled with many good things! Happy New Year-2013! I look forward to working with you all along the journey this coming year.



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Happy New Year!

## January 2013...

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# CHECK IT OUT!