

Dairy's

BOTTOM LINE

Sharing ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed.

Integrating Alternative Feed Into Rations



Make your conference plans now.

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Ventilation, bedding in older calf buildings.

page 14



Essential fatty acids influential in reproductive efficiency.

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There are many aspects to consider when including alternative feeds into your dairy rations. Don't be left behind!

Nutritional Data

Producers and their nutritionists need to know the overall nutritional composition of any alternative feed.

"They need to have an estimate of average composition," says Normand St-Pierre, Ohio State University animal science professor. "When it comes to byproducts, they need to have an estimate of how much the composition varies around those averages."

St-Pierre names the following composition items as important, however, not all will be used for every by-product, he says. The list includes: main nutrients, percent dry matter, crude protein, fat, ash (sum of all the minerals), NDF (neutral detergent fiber), lignin, ADF bound nitrogen for roughage, degradable and undegradable protein estimate and effectiveness of fiber.

"You don't necessarily need all of these for an individual by

product," he explains. For example low fat or low crude protein by products won't really need estimates for fat or crude protein because it will have to be made up for somewhere else in the ration.

The more variable the average composition the feedstuff has, the less you will be able to use, he says.

Finding the information is the next step. St-Pierre says there are "standardized" estimates for feedstuffs that are available coast to coast. However, these estimates can vary greatly.

For localized by-products, he suggests getting the information from the manufacturer is the best way to determine the composition. St-Pierre cited the Hershey plant in Pennsylvania. The Hershey by-product can vary daily, so the "average" might not work well, and producers should get a new composition for the feedstuff. He also says producers should always "assume the worst" values

when it comes to composition.

"In general with by-products it restricts their utilization to somewhere less than 4 pounds per day on a dry matter basis," he says. "That restriction is mostly due to the variability. Most by-products will have a variability of nutrient composition about three times what you would see in either corn or soybean meal."

By-Products Available

St-Pierre breaks all alternative feedstuffs into four categories. "Depending on where you are at, some may be widely available whereas some might not be," he says.

- Biofuel production by-products. The most common across the U.S., these include all distillers grains, soybean meal, soy hulls and more. St-Pierre says the process used to make the biofuel will determine what the by-product will be and the overall

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“Adding Passion, Multiplying Profits” at the PDPW Annual Business Conference

Make plans now to attend dairy's premier education event – the PDPW Annual Business Conference, March 17-18, 2009 at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, Wis. Developed by dairy producers for dairy producers, this conference is where producers and other industry leaders come together for unmatched education and networking opportunities.

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Mark Pearson

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Ron “Gus” Gustafson

experienced setbacks sometime in your life, but few will compare to the challenges Ron “Gus” Gustafson has faced.

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Adding Passion, Multiplying Profits

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“Traits of Successful Business Managers”

The year 2008 will go down as one of the most volatile years in agriculture and the economy in general in our lifetime. In six months time, corn goes from \$7.00 to under \$3.00 a bushel. Oil (and all the inputs farmers buy that are driven by the price of oil) goes from \$147 a barrel to slightly over \$40 a barrel. CME class III May 09 milk futures go from slightly over \$20 per cwt. to slightly over \$13 per cwt. – just to name a few of many examples.

When times are this volatile, producer's management skills are put to an even greater test than normal. This article is one person's perspective in synthesizing the traits of top business managers, especially during these times of extreme volatility. While you may agree or disagree with the observations below, hopefully this article will stimulate your thinking about what you can do to be the best manager you can be.

1. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Understand the difference between being a manager versus a ‘if it's going to get done right, I have to do it myself’ type of person. Critical to this is an honest self-evaluation of your strengths and weaknesses. Good managers recognize their strengths and play to them (since this is where they want to spend most of their time and where they add the most value) and recognize (don't ignore) their weaknesses by delegating to another family member involved in the business or paying someone to do it for them and/or advise them on the topic. Each one of us has things we do well, and things we don't do so well.

2. Become a “risk manager,” not a “risk taker.” Some people have the notion that farming is the ultimate gamble. It doesn't have to be that way. Successful managers typically have a margin management mentality and are

always on the lookout for opportunities to lock-in positive margins, rather than be 100 percent open market for either prices received or key costs of production. Every buying decision, including forward purchasing of inputs, is predicated on evaluating the cost of the purchase in terms of its impact on per unit costs (cost per bushel, cost per acre, cost per pound, cost per hundredweight., etc), and whether there is a positive net margin left over. Selling decisions are also predicated on forward selling when positive margins are available and using tools like options to put floors under prices received, along with taking out proper levels and types of insurance relative to the business you are operating. Good margin managers make buying and selling decisions in tandem.

Plus, to be a successful risk manager you must be able to take the emotion out of the

decision making process – something many business owners find hard to do. For those who get emotionally wrapped up in buying and/or selling decisions, you might want to consider contracting with a professional advisor whose philosophy aligns with yours.

3. Have a written business plan that you actually follow. It can be revised from time to time and can have some level of flexibility built in, but nonetheless it needs to be an active, “living” document. I believe if you have no specific and written goals, you are in essence wandering without a firm destination in mind.

Decisions and the decision-making process should be evaluated periodically in light of what the business plan says. If there needs to be a significant change in the business plan, all stakeholders in the business should be able

See Traits on page 4

Annual Business Conference Live Auction Items Announced

Bid it on a forty dollar, will you gimme forty, Who'll-I bid it at a forty dollar bid?

Leroy Van Dyke, country music artist who sings “The Auctioneer” may not be at the PDPW Annual Business Conference Live Auction, but NFL star and former Packer Adam Timmerman will be there.

We're rolling out the green and gold carpet on Tuesday evening of the Annual Business Conference. After you hear some “touchdown” pointers about adding passion to win the game of life, we'll turn the spotlight from the stage to the crowd to start the auction.

Here's a sneak peak of this year's live auction items:

Registered Holstein Calf

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Donated by: Select Sires

Female Labrador Retriever Puppy

Donated by: Dan Panzer, Ganderland Quality Labradors, Brownsville, Wis.

“Adding Passion, Multiplying Profits” Quilt

Donated by: Karla Zimmerman, Buttercup-D Farm, Fox Lake, Wis.

Pheasant Hunt

Donated by: Diamond V Mills, Inc.

Door County Sailing Getaway

Donated by: ANIMART

To donate to the PDPW Education Foundation silent or live auctions, please contact the auction chairperson JoAnn Maedke at 920-477-2806. All proceeds from the auction benefit the PDPW Education Foundation.

“PDPW is a great organization. I've gained a lot of knowledge and met a lot of different producers to network with. It's been very helpful. I enjoy going to meeting and events.”

~Terry Gaeu, Park Avenue Dairy LLC, Merrill, Wis.

Traits

Continued from page 3

to provide input before a new business plan is finalized. Family problems often result when one of the owners of the business wants to make significant changes without seeking the prior input or consensus of everyone involved.

Written business plans are an excellent tool to reduce the potential for misunderstandings about direction and goals when there are multiple family members and/or owners involved in the business. This means your written business plan must be shared with family members and others involved in the business.

4. Have good records and thoroughly understand cost of production. This not only includes understanding your own business but what is typical of your peers running a similar business. The

concept of "benchmarking" – knowing where you stand relative to the industry in key cost of production categories as well as revenue received areas – is critical. Normally, anyone who is in the top two quartiles (top half) in terms of cost of production gets to keep doing what they are doing. If you are in the top quartile, you tend to be very profitable. However, if you are in the bottom quartile in terms of cost of production, you are likely on your way out of business – whether you know it or not.

5. Have a sound financial structure. In this area I would include the importance of working capital and the proper range of financial leverage (percentage of total assets financed with debt). Always maintain adequate cash on hand (liquid money in a financial institution that is not allocated to any specific

future expenditure) that could cover unexpected and unplanned major expenditures or loss of cash flow.

The concept of the proper range of financial leverage must be linked to risk management. Someone who has quite a bit of financial leverage needs to more aggressively manage risk and lock in positive margins when available (number two above). Take the initiative and ask your primary lender what level of financial leverage they are comfortable with for your operation. Most lenders have ranges they use in determining risk, or what Dr. David Kohl calls "green light" (good to go), "yellow light" (exercise caution) and "red light" (don't make any major decisions without consulting with your lender first). Make sure you know the color of the light you are operating under.

Today, the level of volatility is greater than we have seen it for a number of years. Successfully managing in times of great volatility puts a premium on being a good business manager. While any list of this type is subjective and someone else might think differently, I put this together with the input of a variety of financial professionals, industry consultants, academia and others who work with farmers. Hopefully it is helpful in thinking about those things you can work on to be a better manager in these volatile times.

Ken Reiners is a senior vice president at Badgerland Financial, headquartered in Baraboo, Wis. Badgerland Financial is committed to supporting the state's dairy industry and is a proud PDPW Mission Sponsor.



Conference

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This farm boy from Nebraska truly took negatives and made them positives, by adding his passion and keeping a positive outlook on life.

Gus is a remarkable motivator, a humble gentleman with a big sense of humor and an example for all of us as we struggle with challenges. In his story, you'll find the inspiration to rise above your own limits - whether they're imposed by circumstances, other people or yourself.

Along with these outstanding keynotes, you'll experience interactive breakout sessions, unparalleled producer panels and unlimited networking opportunities. This is your chance to meet and learn from other producers who are experiencing the same challenges you are. All of this and more delivered in a positive and energizing atmosphere.

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Business Conference and other PDPW programs online at www.pdpw.org or by calling 800-947-7379.

"I attend the PDPW Annual Business Conference because it is a unique educational opportunity which offers a wide range of information from animal husbandry to personal development."

Logan Bower, Pleasant View Farms, Blain, PA

"The PDPW Annual Business Conference is a refreshing escape from our daily routine, and it is very uplifting to associate with positive people who share the same business challenges every day and when planning for the future."

Randy Bonde, Bonde Acres Dairy, Newton, WI

"The Annual Conference is my favorite event because it offers so much useful information, and it's a great opportunity to network."

Marion Barlass, Barlass Jersey Farms, Janesville, WI

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Johne's Disease Prevention Linked to Colostrum Replacers, Knowledge

The health and well being of a herd is a critical piece in the puzzle of farming and as any farmer knows, keeping your cattle healthy is a top priority. One major concern among dairy producers is the spread of Johne's disease, which affects approximately 68 percent of herds in the U.S., according to a 2007 report by NAHMS. In Wisconsin alone Johne's disease costs the dairy industry approximately \$54 million each year in reduced milk production and decreased weight.

When you're dealing with that kind of change it's important to find ways to protect your cattle and your wallet. Sandra Godden, DVM, DVSc, and associate professor with the Department of Veterinary Population Medicine at the University of Minnesota, along with other researchers, have conducted research on one such way. The purpose of their study was to estimate the risk of mycobacterium paratuberculosis (MAP) infection in heifer calves fed raw maternal colostrum versus colostrum replacer.

"Colostrum replacers could be one tool to help dairy producers reduce the risk of transmission of MAP infection from raw colostrum. This research will contribute to the development of science-based comprehensive Johne's control programs and hopefully result in a reduced prevalence of Johne's disease in the industry," proposes Godden.

The clinical trial used 497 heifer calves from 12 different dairy operations in Minnesota and Wisconsin that were born into Johne's disease endemic herds. The commercial dairy farms chosen had herd sizes ranging from 190 to 1,550 head. On each farm, heifer calves were removed from their dams within a half hour to an hour of birth and were immediately placed into one of two groups. One group was fed only raw maternal colostrum and the

other test group received a commercial colostrum replacer.

All groups were consistent with the timing and number of feedings per group, but farm practices differed in the number and amounts of colostrum feedings. Feeding amounts ranged from one feeding of 3.8 liters to one feeding of at 3.8 liters and then a second at 1.9 liters eight hours later. One farm offered 1.9 liters of colostrum at two feedings.

All of the heifer calves were followed to adulthood and then tested for MAP infection at 30, 42 and 54 months of age. Using a commercially available ELISA assay as well as the conventional bacterial fecal culture, researchers were able to determine that those calves fed commercial colostrum replacer were 44 percent less likely to become infected by MAP compared to the calves who consumed maternal colostrum replacer.

The long-term repercussions of this type of study will hopefully lead to "adoption of efficacious Johne's control programs, resulting in reduced prevalence and impact of the disease within the industry," comments Godden.

According to the research abstract conclusion: "This study shows that plasma derived from colostrum replacer feeding programs can reduce the risk of MAP infection that leads to Johne's disease and also implies that raw maternal colostrum may in fact be a source of MAP infection for calves. The colostrum replacement products are an effective management tool in dairy herds that are attempting to reduce the prevalence of Johne's disease." The complete peer reviews manuscript for the study should be released in March of 2009.

"This research shows that colostrum replacers are a good management tool, however, colostrum replacers aren't the

only method or tool producers can consider adopting that will reduce transmission of Johne's to animals," says Godden.

Preventing the introduction of Johne's disease into a herd is the most cost-effective way to control this infectious disease, rather than having to use expensive ways to control or eradicate the disease after it enters a herd and begins to spread. Ways a producer can prevent Johne's from being introduced into their herd are:

- Buy animals from M. paratuberculosis-free herds by using test results based on whole herd testing rather than one individual animal.
- Understand the risk of buying infected cattle and know the high consequences associated with the disease and your business
- Keep a closed herd, or buy as few animals as possible
- Look into buying from herds

that a registered in an official herd "certification program." According to the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System, in 2007 nearly one in three operations participated in a Johne's disease certification program.

These management options along with smart business practices can help protect your herd from the introduction and spread of Johne's disease. Knowledge of the disease, management and prevention are all-important factors to consider. Godden suggests, "producers should contact their regular herd veterinarian or State Board of Animal Health for information and assistance in developing and implementing a comprehensive Johne's control program within their herd," is a good place to beginning getting control.

By Brianna Ditzenberger

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Rations

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nutritional composition.

- Human food processing by-products. These are very locally and regionally available. Some examples include, corn gluten feed, corn hominy, almond hulls, citrus hulls, whey permeate, wheat bran, wheat midlings, cookie meal, brewers grains, and rice hulls.

- Fiber by-product. These come from processing cotton and include whole cotton seed and cotton seed hull.

- Animal harvest by-products. These include any by-products from slaughter plants such as, but not limited to bone meal, blood meal and tallow.

By-Product Advantages

St. Pierre outlined three main advantages of alternative feedstuff inclusion in dairy rations.

The first advantage of using by-products is that they are not in direct competition with humans. "As we look at planet earth and our ability to feed humans, all these by-products could not be fed to humans," he says. "It's a nice line of defense when people are attacking animal production."

The second benefit is they provide a wider variety of sources of nutrients in the rations. "With the advances we have in nutrition these days, it's becoming more and more difficult to balance a ration with just corn and soybeans," he says. In fact, he doesn't think it is possible to do anymore.

Some by-product's unique nutrients can provide a better overall and balanced ration than conventional rations.

The third and probably the most popular is the cost savings for producers who use by-products. "By-products have to produce a savings or people will not use them," he says. Rations can be balanced without them, but since they are less expensive, it provides

a great economic advantage.

Disadvantages

Disadvantages include the overall nutritional variability. "It limits the amount that can be fed," he adds. If not used properly, by-product use can negatively impact production.

He also names finding a stable supply for a by-product. Producers will have to manage feed supplies better to make sure the feed is on-hand when needed.

Handling and storage can also be an issue with by-products. Special storage may be needed for wet products and wet by-products because they have a shorter shelf-life than other feedstuffs.

Economics

"By-products are becoming more economically viable," he says. "The fallacy is that people think all by-products follow corn and soybean prices closely, and they don't."

By-products have their own market, and tend to lag the traditional grain and oilseed markets. So, when corn and soybeans go up, by-products will take longer to reach those higher prices.

Generally, by-products are about a week to a month behind. The price lag when prices go up can create a bargain price for by-products.

The same lag happens when corn and soybean prices decrease. At sharp decreases, by-products can become a "rip-off". Unfortunately, St-Pierre says some producers continue to purchase by-products at the "rip-off" price, losing the economic advantage of by-products.

St-Pierre says during the substantial price fluctuations, by-products generally overshoot and go higher than the grain and oilseed markets.

Future

"In this new world we have

entered there have been some fundamental structural changes in the world the last two years," he says. "In terms of us raising animals and milking animals, what it means is that a large and growing proportion of what we have used traditionally as feed will now be going into generating energy."

"Our ability to deal in this new world – that is all these processes leave behind a whole lot of by-products and our ability to use them and increasingly use more by-products to feed our



Normand St-Pierre

animals will be the prime determinate of our long-term success," he adds.

Just thinking corn and soybeans will lead to leaving too much money on the table, he says.

Don't miss more information on by-products at the PDPW Annual Business Conference March 17-18 where the well-versed St-Pierre will be presenting more on by-product use.

By Sarah Young

The expert featured in this article, Normand St-Pierre, Ph.D., P.A.S., Professor at The Ohio State University, is one of the Annual Business Conference's featured speakers. Using his more than 25 years of field and academic experience, Dr. St-Pierre will provide clear and practical answers to the many questions associated with feeding alternative feedstuffs to dairy cows.

Developed by dairy producers and created to meet the needs of our industry, this top-notch conference will challenge and engage you. You'll take home a renewed passion for your business and the latest information to improve your bottom line. Learn more at www.pdpw.org or call 800-947-7379.

"I enjoy being able to network with others that have had experience with similar things."

~Andrew Nitz, Busy Bee Acres, LLC, Markesan, Wis.

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Leading the Success of the Dairy Industry Through Education

with Dean Strauss, PDPW President



Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW), a dairy producer-led education organization, has worked hard on your behalf to deliver the educational resources and information that you, your business and family can utilize during these interesting and volatile times in the dairy business.

Created by a handful of visionary dairy producers in 1992 who established our mission "to share ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed," we have built Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin into the strong, grassroots organization that today

touches thousands of individuals and businesses and continues to positively shape the future of our industry.

As we reflect on 2008, we'd like to share some successes and accomplishments.

Education

"Delivering unmatched education opportunities"

High-Level Training and Professional Conferences: PDPW continues to listen to producers and deliver educational opportunities you can't find anywhere else. Last year we increased programming by over 40 percent, and this year we took it a step further. During the 2008-2009 educational

calendar year, we will offer over 40 days of educational programming, covering topics that dairy producers requested.

Check out page 24 to see upcoming PDPW events.

Vision

"Working together to better our futures"

Industry Leadership: PDPW works to facilitate and lead the industry in developing and communicating a united dairy voice. The organization works as an "umbrella" gathering resources together and listening to the different views and needs of the entire industry. By leading a united effort, we strengthen our dairy infrastructure and grow the

dairy industry. One example is the Agriculture Community Engagement Program (ACE), which is a three-way partnership with the Wisconsin Towns Association, Wisconsin Counties Association and PDPW. Developed in 2002, ACE educates and promotes constructive engagement that allows agriculture and local communities to co-exist and thrive.

Voice

"Providing a voice for dairy"

Public Policy Committee: The PDPW Public Policy Committee meets regularly with the Wisconsin Department of

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Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin Membership Form

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Membership Options:

PRODUCER MEMBER – \$100

Voting member - One member per dairy entity covers all managers, operators, spouses and employees. While each dairy has one vote in making member decisions, every person within the dairy (operator, spouse and employees) enjoys the benefits and member rate at PDPW events.

ASSOCIATE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER – \$150

Non-voting member - Membership is open to any individual interested in the dairy industry who does not qualify as an individual or a corporate membership.

CORPORATE MEMBER – \$300

Non-voting member - Open to any group, company or organization interested in the dairy industry. With one corporate membership, every person within the company/organization enjoys the benefits and member rate at PDPW events.

Send this form to: Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin, N5776 US Hwy 151, Suite 1, Fond du Lac, WI 54937
Or become a member online at www.pdpw.org, or call us at 800-947-7379, or contact us via e-mail at mail@pdpw.org.

PDPW: An Organization For Dairy Producers Like You

WHAT IS PDPW?

Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW) is the largest producer-led dairy organization in the nation. PDPW has grown from our humble beginnings in 1992 when a small group of dairy producers saw a need for education and information that would help Wisconsin producers improve profitability. Today we are a network with thousands of dairy businesses from throughout the nation who have the same passion for the future of the dairy industry. That passion helps us lead the success of the dairy industry through education.

WHO IS PDPW?

PDPW membership represents the gamut of dairy producers. Every type of dairy producer and every size operation is represented and welcomed in our membership. This breadth of our members is represented by the attendees at the PDPW Annual Business Conference, dairy's premier event. PDPW began as a Wisconsin-only organization. Today we have grown to a network of thousands of producers and industry leaders covering the country. In fact, we have producer members from fifteen states, representing dairies from coast-to-coast. These producers from across the nation seek business programming and resources only found at PDPW. We offer a wide variety of educational programming designed to meet your specific needs and present new, innovative information that is useful to you. One idea, solution and approach doesn't work for everyone – each is unique. We are dairy producers – just like you.

Different operations, unique businesses, one vision: to lead the success of the dairy industry. No matter the type of your dairy or the size of your herd, PDPW embraces the entire industry and lives its mission "to share ideas, solutions, resources and experiences that help dairy producers succeed."

PDPW is all about connections. Connecting you with:

- Resources to improve and grow your business
- Advice and answers
- Other dairy producers who share the same experiences you do
- Industry leaders and experts
- World class scientists and researchers
- The next generation of dairy producers who are excited about their role in the industry
- Industry's preferred suppliers

"PDPW continues to address the most important topics of concern to the industry.

Your credibility and access to educational, policy and governmental leaders places you as the leader in promoting and growing the dairy industry."

~Andy Johnson, Wisconsin Land Conservation Directory, Wausau, Wis

Sexed semen can greatly improve the genetic potential within your herd. But, it can be a very costly investment, especially when it is not used wisely.

It is recommended to be used on virgin heifers, meaning the first service on heifers.

"That's where you're going to see the most genetic improvement," said Angie Bowen, district sales representative and reproductive specialist for Semex. Bowen's sales territory covers Arizona and western

New Mexico and her consulting territory is the western U.S. and western Canada.



Angie Bowen

Using Sexed Semen Wisely

"On any dairy, it typically makes economic sense to use on the top 10-15 percent genetically of heifer crop that you have coming in," said Bowen. "You can guarantee that you have daughters coming through for generations on proven lines within your herd's genetically superior animals."

Sexed semen should be used for the first one to two services and if more services are necessary, conventional semen should be used because the cost is restrictive. It can be used on all breeds of dairy cattle.

"In Jerseys, there are a lot of herds that are using (to great success) sexed semen on their mature cows also," said Bowen. "The only concern with that is the semen companies can't stand behind the conception rates for cows."

This is because of the overall differences between heifers and cows such as the hormone cycle and fertility. So, when sexed semen is used in cows it's at your own risk.

Many dairy producers throughout the U.S. are including sexed semen as a reproductive tool in their reproduction program. Sexed semen costs \$30-\$70, while the average cost is \$35-\$45.

"It's worth paying \$50 for a heifer calf in that sense than it would be paying \$12 or \$15 and having a 50-50 shot of getting a heifer," said Bowen.

Plus, many places do not have an economic outlet for bull calves.

"Bull calves are more of a liability than they are anything," said Bowen.

"Dairies that are really in tough situations with not having any place to ship bull calves will also use sexed semen more often because it reduces the number of bulls that they have to try and find something to do with."

However, producers should be aware of the fact that there will still be some bull calves born with sexed semen.

Producers who are on the fence about using sexed semen should analyze the advantages and disadvantages and decide if it is a viable reproductive tool for their operation.

"By using sexed semen, you're reducing the number of bull calves, increasing the number of heifers overall, increasing the genetic merit of your herd and bringing up a generation of cows that are going to be more profitable for them than they would be strictly on conventional semen," said Bowen.

"I would definitely recommend if they are going to use sexed semen they only use it on the top 10-20 percent of their heifers if finances are a big concern," said Bowen. "Those are typically the animals that you want to be getting the most heifers out of for genetic improvement in a herd at any rate."

This also saves producers the cost of having to bring in more replacements.

"So, if they're using it on those animals then they're getting the most bang for their buck when buying sexed semen because it is a very pricey investment," added Bowen.

Sexed semen is simply another reproductive option that is available for producers. Like any other tool it can also be mismanaged.

"If dairyman are considering sexed semen as a means of improving their herd, they should really consult with their genetic representative, vet and breeder to make sure that everyone is on the same page," said Bowen.

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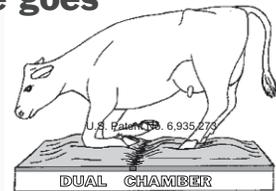
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Ventilation, Bedding Important For Calves in Older Buildings

Drive down a rural road and you're likely to see older farm buildings begging to be put to good use. Some can be, since they're far from having outlived their useful lives.

One use for an older building might be retrofitting it for calves. Some of the advice that applies to housing calves in a new building can also apply to raising them in an older one.

Outdoor hutches are sometimes considered the gold standard for calves. But moving young calves indoors makes tending them more comfortable for the people involved. There's no feeding calves or cleaning pens during times of cold weather, snow or rain.

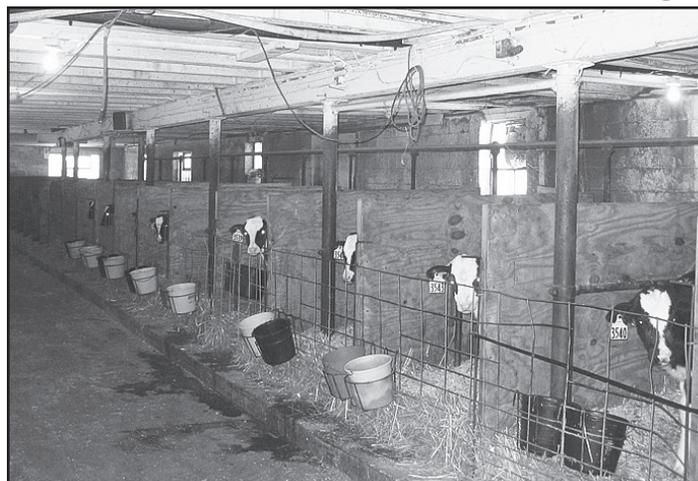
But raising calves indoors can lead to other problems, like pneumonia, especially if the ventilation is poor. That poor ventilation can result from enclosing calf pens with solid panels on three or four

sides, notes Ken Nordlund, a veterinarian in the school of veterinary medicine at UW-Madison.

A field trial in Wisconsin found three key factors linked to fewer calf respiratory problems. These included placing a solid panel between each calf, giving calves plenty of straw so they could "nest" and keep warm, and keeping the amount of bacteria in the air inside the pens to a minimum.

To reduce the number of airborne bacteria, make each pen larger, says Nordlund. Another step is to open the pen up a bit by not having it totally enclosed.

Calf pens inside barns are microenvironments, Nordlund says. That means they can have temperatures, air flows and bacteria loads that are different from those in other parts of the building. In the field trial mentioned above, 13 barns were tested for airborne



Raising calves indoors is more comfortable for the people involved, but it can lead to other problems, such as pneumonia, especially if the ventilation is poor.

bacteria. Bacteria counts in the air in the alleys outside the pens were generally "excellent," Nordlund says, but in the pens there was "considerable" variation.

"...The average calf barn was estimated to have an air exchange rate of 18 changes per hour, well above the recommended minimal four changes per hour during winter conditions," Nordlund says. "The quality of air in the pens of many of the 'overventilated' barns was poor... A poorly ventilated barn probably assures unhygienic air within the pens. However, a well-ventilated barn does not ensure hygienic air."

It's still a good idea to have a solid panel between calves, making it tougher for disease organisms to be passed back and forth. But keep the tops and ends of the pens "as open as possible," Nordlund says.

The "ideal" pen has two solid sides and a short, solid panel about 20 inches high at the rear of the pen. Closing a pen up any more increases airborne bacterial counts "dramatically," the veterinarian says.

If there is more than one row of calf pens in a barn, each row should be separated by an alley several feet wide. But if the rows have to join, a third,

solid, side should separate the calves.

Keeping the tops and ends of the pens open will help the flow of air, but it will also make them colder. That's where the right amount of straw factors in.

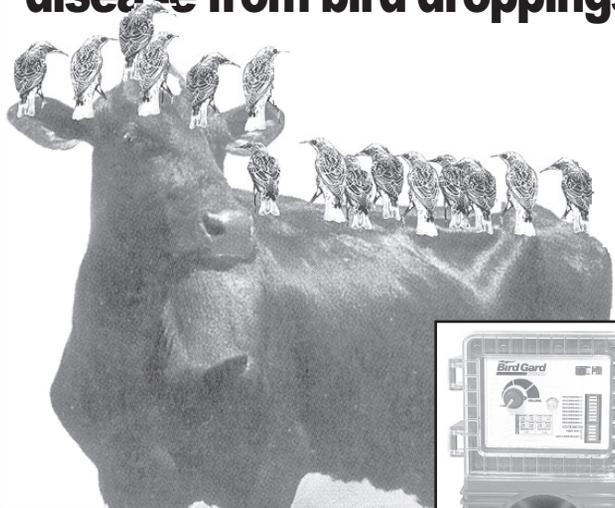
"Calves are vulnerable to cold stress in winter. The thermoneutral zone of a newborn calf is between 10 and 26 degrees Centigrade (50 and 78 degrees Fahrenheit) and between 0 and 23 degrees Centigrade (32 and 73 degrees Fahrenheit) for a one-month old calf."

The field trial was conducted from January through March, and the average temperature in the barns for a two-hour period near noon was 3.9 degrees Centigrade (39 Fahrenheit) and ranged from -6.7 to 12.2 degrees Centigrade (20 to 54 degrees Fahrenheit). Overnight temperatures were, of course, lower.

"Clearly, the young calves were exposed to temperatures below their thermoneutral zone during many days and nights through the period in which the trial was conducted," comments Nordlund.

But bedding can help calves reduce their heat losses. If the bedding is deep enough, a calf

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See Ventilation on page 7

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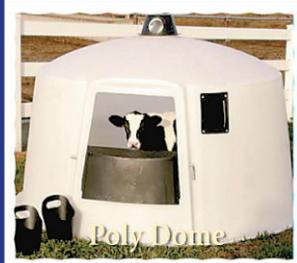


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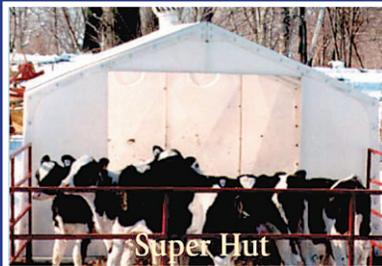
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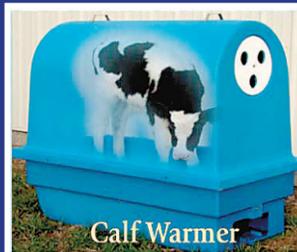
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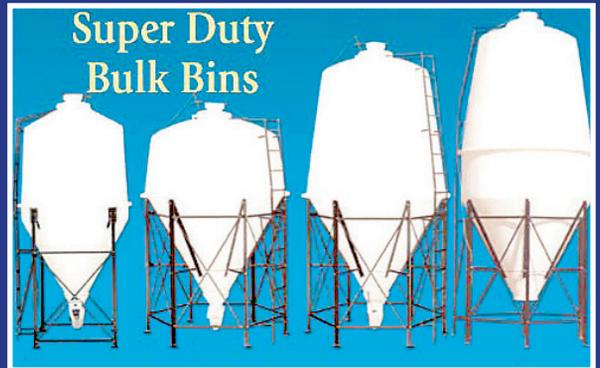
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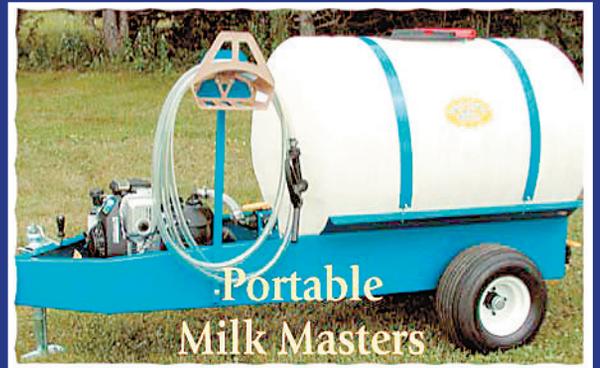
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Producer Profile



The 440-cow Udder Wise Dairy owned by the Bohl family near Chippewa Falls has been a member of PDPW for about three years. They grow corn and alfalfa on their 1,200 acres and always find time to attend the Annual Business Conference. Nick says, "The Annual Business Meeting is a must for me. It's at a good time of the year and they have top of the line speakers. "I like this event in particular because you can sort of tailor your experience. You can choose who or what seminars you want to listen to." Bohl also likes that PDPW always seems to have something going on. "I receive mailings from them often and there's always something good to go to," he says. "It's your choice to go - if you can get away." He says the size of PDPW allows them to bring in quality speakers at every event. "Not everyone can do that," he says. "PDPW offers many types of seminars and high quality speakers every time."



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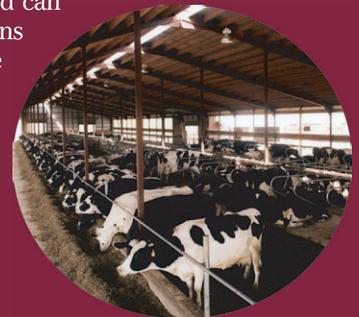
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Producer Profile



Doug and Mary Behnke milk 240 cows on their Century Farm near Clintonville. The couple grows alfalfa, corn and soybeans on their 800 acres. They've been members of PDPW for "more than a dozen years," says Mary. "Education is the no. 1 value we find in belonging to PDPW," she affirms. "Networking is another - knowing everyone else is in the same boat, has the same issues, camaraderie." The Behnke's are also very supportive of PDPW's educational programs. Doug has attended several including Dairy Connect, Employee Training, some marketing seminars and Hoof Care. He's learned something valuable at each. Mary has attended the Calf Care seminars and, because of the quality and usefulness of the information she really wants some of her employees to attend the Hispanic Calf Care workshop when one comes near the Clintonville area. Mary says of the seminars, "If you know its PDPW sponsoring it, you know you'll get something out of it. They're always quality speakers and there's never a sales pitch. They're just really good."

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Environmental Impact on Hoof Health and Reproductive Performance

Have you ever felt stressed in the office or at home to the point where you don't perform to your full potential? It happens to most of us, but not everyone takes the time to think of the stressful conditions which are often put on your main income- your cows.

Stress in dairy cattle often comes from the environment they live in and can have adverse effects on hoof health and reproductive performance. One of the most important factors is the surface on which they stand for so many hours a day.

Confining cattle on hard surfaces for prolonged periods of time contributes to the overall decline of feet and leg health. The end result is usually lameness in the form of laminitis and/or claw problems such as white line disease or sole ulcers. Hard surface confinement increases weight load on feet while also constricting exercise which leads to overgrown hooves, weak pasterns and wide claws.

Another environmental factor contributing to hoof health is stall comfort. Having enough stalls for all cows, a good stall design and adequate bedding will reduce stress on your herd and will encourage them to lay for a longer amount of time each day. However, a poor stall design, having too little bedding or having too few stalls will only make the stress level higher.

Hoof health isn't your only concern when it comes to surface options. Reproductive performance may also suffer if stress levels are too high.

According to John Parrish, an animal science professor and specialist in endocrinology and reproductive physiology at the UW-Madison, "If the surface the cow walks on is slippery or leads to pain in the hoof, the animals will not exhibit estrus."



Confining dairy cattle to hard surfaces for extended periods of time can significantly impact hoof health.

"Any stress can reduce reproductive performance," said Parrish. "Stress is likely to reduce GnRH pulse frequency and may lead to reduced rates as far as conception, pregnancy, calving and ovulation."

Parrish also mentioned that problems with hoof health, depending on the facility, may also lead to reduced feed intake which also plays a key role in GnRH pulse frequency. If using hormonal injections to time ovulation, it is likely that you will see little to no reproductive impact.

So what can be done to improve the environment for your herd?

If concrete is your choice surface option, it is recommended that you groove the surface of the floor. This increases traction, reducing chance of a slip or fall, which producers find is well worth the expense. However, perhaps the biggest mistake a producer makes when laying concrete is the type of grooving on the floor. An extremely abrasive surface or too smooth of a surface is not desirable and can be avoided. A flat and smooth surface between grooves, smooth groove edges with a right angle between the

groove and floor surface, and correct groove width, height, and depth should all be considered in construction of

See Hoof Health on page 27

"As our business has evolved, so has PDPW. A decade ago, we looked to PDPW for business management education and appreciated PDPW's efforts in positioning Wisconsin dairying as a viable profession. Today, our partners and employees take in a variety of PDPW education programs during the year."

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"The PDPW Annual Business Conference is a refreshing escape from our daily routine, and it is very uplifting to associate with positive people who share the same business challenges every day and when planning for the future."

~Randy Bonde, Bonde Acres Dairy, Newton, Wis.

Ventilation

Continued from page 14 can trap a layer of warm air around itself. The researchers developed a "nesting score" system that they used to decide whether a calf had enough bedding to stay warm.

Nesting score 'one' was assigned when a calf lay on top of the bedding with its legs exposed. A score of 'two' was assigned when calves nestled slightly into the bedding, but part of their legs were visible above the bedding. Score 'three' (the best) was assigned when a calf appeared to nestle deeply into the bedding and its legs were not visible.

Bigger pens

One way to reduce the airborne bacteria in a pen is to make it bigger. In the field trial, the average calf pen was slightly more than 32 square feet, or about eight feet long by four feet wide.

Nordlund suggests enlarging these individual calf pens by about 25 percent. Doing so, he

says, could cut the amount of bacteria in the air by 50 percent.

Extra ventilation

Sometimes supplemental ventilation is what it takes to cut the load of bacteria that are in the air.

"The most successful intervention has been the installation of supplemental positive-pressure ventilation systems. Fresh, outside air is forced into a positive pressure duct system and directed downward into the pen microenvironment," Nordlund explains.

Instead of using metal ductwork, Nordlund says he usually recommends fabric or polyethylene vent tubing. Doing so cuts cost substantially.

Supplemental ventilation usually is set up to deliver approximately 15 cubic feet per minute of fresh air to each pen. Fans are mounted on exterior walls. The ventilation tubes fasten right to the fans. This

prevents any inside air from recirculating.

The ventilation tubes are hung from cables between the walls. Holes are punched in the tubes so air exits at about 800 feet per minute.

"The tube suppliers usually offer a range of hole diameters ranging from one-half to three inches. The larger the hole, the greater the 'throw' distance," Nordlund explains. "We usually find a combination of number and diameter of holes so there is at least one hole per pen and the targeted exit air speeds are reached."

Holes are punched in the tubing at various "clock" locations. The higher a tube is above a pen, the more vertical the hole needs to be.

"The goal," says Nordlund, "is to introduce small volumes of fresh air into the microenvironment without creating a draft."

By Ron Johnson

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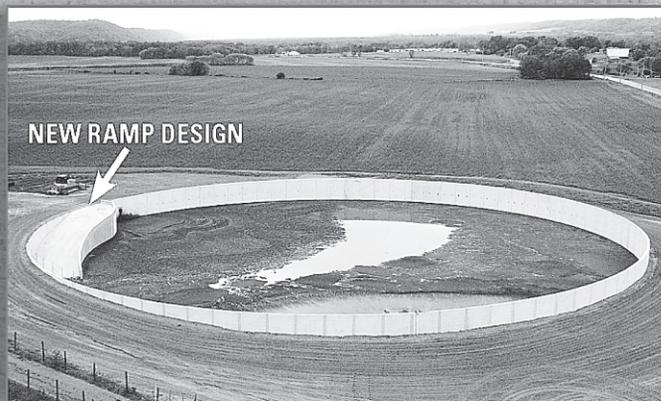


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Reproductive efficiency is essential to any dairy operation. In fact, reproduction is the No. 1 reason for culling on a dairy farm.

With the information obtained from recent studies conducted by Dr. Roy Ax at the University of Arizona, producers now have another option to increase the reproductive efficiency on their operation through feeding.

This strong correlation between feeding and reproduction was concluded after two recent studies that incorporated a feed supplement in both pre-fresh and post-fresh cow rations containing the essential fatty acids, linoleic and linolenic acid. Both studies compared the use of a rumen bypass fat product (a high energy feed supplement) to a rumen bypass fat product containing approximately 4.5 times as much linoleic acid and more than 23 times as much linolenic acid as in the standard rumen bypass fat product.

The studies showed the diet containing the rumen bypass fat product with increased levels of linoleic and linolenic acid improved reproductive efficiency. Cows were cycling sooner, uterine involution was taking place earlier and there was less incidence of uterine infection. Research also illustrated an increased pregnancy rate, decreased days open and decreased services per conception.

"Specifically with the linoleic and linolenic ration there was about a 5 percent increase in overall reproductive efficiency," said Angie Bowen, a graduate student who gathered research for Dr. Ax's research project. Bowen has continued her work in the reproductive field, now working as a district sales representative and reproductive specialist for Semex. "If producers are looking for a cost effective means of ensuring that they're

providing their cows with the most benefit during the transition period, feeding a product like Megalac-R (a rumen bypass fat product with increased levels of linoleic and linolenic acid) will help to bolster cows' hormone production and immune system."

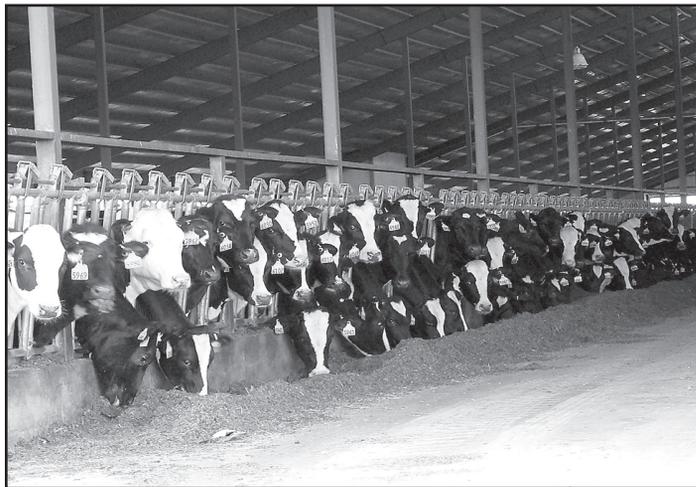
While the studies demonstrated an impact in overall reproductive efficiency, the greatest influence was on uterine health. Metritis alone greatly contributes to a cow's reproductive performance with an estimated cost of about \$350 for a single metritis case, according to a recent study on the economics of postpartum uterine health. Decreased uterine health not only significantly impacts dairy herd performance but also profitability.

"In mild cases that normally wouldn't have been caught by the herd vet, simply because the cow is not showing any symptoms of it, this will really help maintain that uterine health, rescue some of your conception rate and reduce services per conception early on," said Bowen. "In the long-term it will help the cow maintain that uterine health through every lactation and freshening period."

This in turn will help prevent uterine damage from occurring as quickly and will also help to reduce culling due to reproduction.

"Uterine health is one of those things that you typically don't think about as having a huge impact on profitability and productivity on a dairy, but recent studies are finding more and more that it's having a greater impact than we've given it credit for in the past," said Bowen. "A lot of that now is that we're better equipped to realize what a uterine health problem is and what is not."

"Megalac-R is definitely a tool that can help with benefiting the health of the uterus in dairy cows for



Incorporating a feed supplement in both pre-fresh and post-fresh cow rations containing the essential fatty acids, linoleic and linolenic acids can greatly improve reproductive efficiency.

freshening," added Bowen.

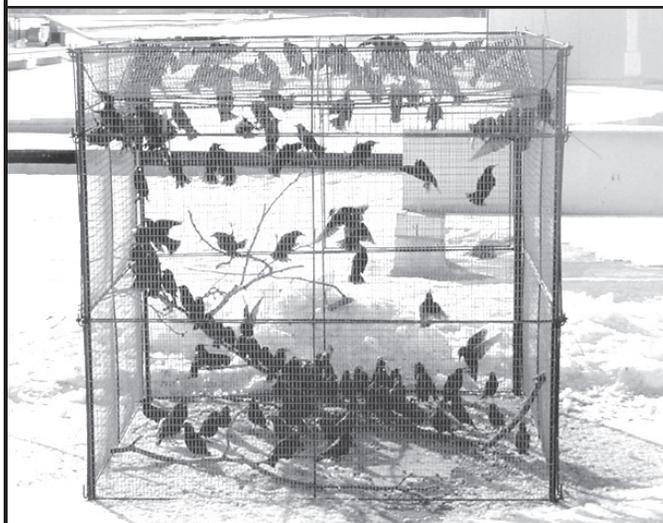
While the benefits of using a rumen bypass fat product with increased levels of linoleic and linolenic acid stand true, there is certainly a cost difference that can be daunting to

producers.

The cost of feeding one-half of a pound of a rumen bypass fat product per cow per day is 40 cents, while the cost of

See Fatty Acids on page 22

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Success

Continued from page 8

Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection and the Department of Natural Resources Secretaries to foster open dialogue between the agencies and producers. We also work with the Deans of UW-Extension and the University of Wisconsin colleges. Our goal is to educate others and to help keep leaders focused on the changing needs of the dairy industry. With tight budgets and growing society pressures, it is now more important than ever that PDPW develops and fosters these important relationships for the dairy industry. PDPW is aggressively taking steps to ensure we are at the table and have a voice when decisions affecting our industry are being made. PDPW remains very involved, committed and focused on ensuring a strong dairy industry.

Proactive

"Controlling our destiny"

Catalyst and facilitator for the National Dairy Animal Well-Being Initiative: It was PDPW members and the producer board who recognized the need for an industry wide initiative to demonstrate our industry's commitment to animal care and well-being. This national initiative developed the Principles and Guidelines that create a uniform umbrella that validates the dairy industry's commitment and ethical obligation to provide appropriate care for its animals. The Principles and Guidelines were recently announced at World Dairy Expo.

Future

"Ensuring a positive future"

Youth and College Student Development: We know Wisconsin will need another great generation of dairy producers to maintain and

grow our industry, and we have implemented several programs, which have a positive impact on the young people in our industry.

The Youth Leadership Derby allows youth to explore the many careers available in the dairy industry. The Enhanced Internship Program connects dairy producers with college students for an on-farm summer internship. The goal of the internship program is to stimulate career planning with production agriculture considered as an option. The Mentor Program matches producers with students for a job shadow and mentoring relationship, allowing producers to provide advice and guidance to students.

PDPW is dedicated to its mission of providing our members and the industry with information, education and communications. We will continue to execute this work in a professional manner on

your behalf. If you would like to discuss PDPW opportunities or becoming a member, please contact us at 800-947-7379 or mail@pdpw.org.

On behalf of the PDPW board members, we wish you, your family and everyone on your dairy a happy, healthy and prosperous 2009!

Dean Strauss owns and operates Majestic Meadows Dairy with his father, brother and another partner in Sheboygan Falls, Wis. Dean is the Financial and Operations Manager working with finances, feeding, purchasing and field production. Their dairy initially grew from 140 to 450 cows in 1998. In 2002, they expanded to 550 cows. Today Majestic Meadows Dairy is milking 685 cows and working 1,500 acres. After attending UW-Platteville, Dean started his career as a nutritionist, and then followed his dream to become a dairy producer, joining the family operation in 1998.

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Fatty Acids

Continued from page 21

feeding a rumen bypass fat product with increased levels of linoleic and linolenic acid is 25 cents per cow per day. The recommended feeding procedure for either of the feed supplements is 14-21 days pre-fresh and 100-150 days post-fresh.

Producers should analyze their reproduction program to justify whether or not this is viable tool for their operation.

"Herds that fall within the normal reproductive range are probably going to benefit the most from this," said Bowen. "Compared to going onto a timed breeding protocol or changing their shot protocol to help rescue their reproduction program, they can include this in the feed, it doesn't include a whole lot of labor and they'll be able to see a difference

within about six months."

Some producers may also choose to only feed the supplement during certain times of the year.

"We saw a greater recovery in the summer," said Bowen. "There are some dairymen who have fed it for a year and have seen a lot of difference in the summer but it didn't justify to them to feed it in the spring and winter. So they'll only feed the Megalac-R in the summer to keep their pregnancy rate within a couple percentage points closer to what they are in the cooler season for the year."

"This is definitely a supplement that if managed well with a nutritional component for a transition cow is going to pay the dairyman back for his investment," said Bowen.

By Kelsi Hendrickson



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February 4 & 5, 2009

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Agriculture Community Engagement (ACE) Regional Meeting

February 19, 2009

Holiday Inn, Fond du Lac

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Annual Business Conference

March 17-18, 2009

Alliant Energy Center, Madison

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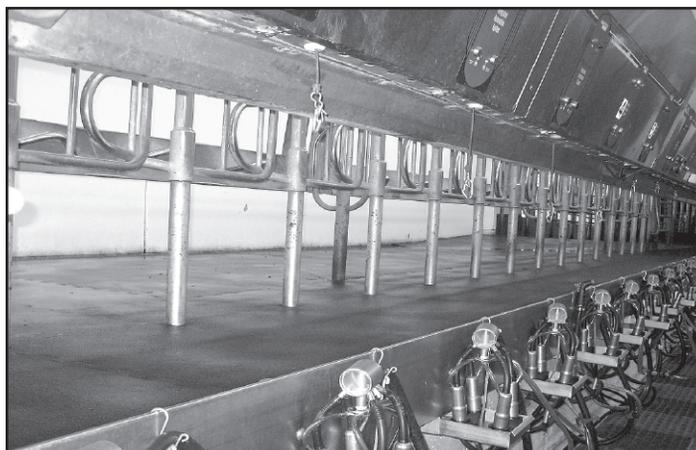
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Hoof Health

Continued from page 19
the surface.

While grooving is of major importance in maintaining hoof health, keeping the surface as dry as possible is another major factor. Wet concrete first softens the hoof horn and stimulates faster wear on the hoof itself. Both dry and wet concrete are harsh on the hoof, but wet concrete is particularly more abrasive. However, a completely smooth surface decreases abrasion but contributes significantly to hoof overgrowth.

The best way to keep hoof health high and reproductive issues at a minimum is to allow cows to leave the concrete for a few hours per day. Dirt lots or pasture allows animals to take pressure off their feet, joints, tendons and leg ligaments while also giving them an opportunity for exercise. Another way to provide relief for your cows is



Considering the use of rubber belting or mats in areas of your facility, such as the parlor, can help provide reduce hoof health problems.

to consider using rubber belting or mats in areas of your facility such as around a feed bunk. The alternative pressure-relieving surface may encourage cows to come up to the bunk to eat and stay there for a longer period of time.

Being both durable and economical, concrete is the most prevalent surface option used today, but must be placed

carefully and should be used with an alternative surface option such as a dirt lot or rubber matting. Ensuring your herd environment is stress free and economical can be a stressful task in itself but must be accomplished to eliminate hoof health and reproductive problems in the long-run.

By Kayla Buske

"PDPW offers timely topics and new technologies to deal with trends and concerns in the dairy industry."

-Lori Berget, Vigortone



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~Amanda Heisner,
Heisner Family Dairy, LLC,
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organizations, and through programs at UW-Platteville.

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