

DCC Waterbeds®

Dual Chamber Cow Waterbeds

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Roerview Dairy Chose DCC Waterbeds ISO Over Sand for New, 104 lb. avg., Robotic Barn



The Roerick family was debating between sand bedding and DCC Waterbeds for their new robotic milking facility.

Stephen Roerick tells us why they chose **DCC Waterbeds ISO**:

Q: When you were considering a change, what challenges were you dealing with?

A: To be honest my brother and I really wanted to use sand bedding in the new barn because of the advantage of additional traction. But Roger and his dad didn't cause of extra management required And with our size we couldn't figure out how to best utilize it. We would have the additional cost of a manure pump and separator and we have our pits pumped, and guys just don't want to pump them with the sand in there. In the old barn with the bedding pack we were dealing with SCC issues and very high bedding expenses.

Q: What goals/expectations did you have of your DCC Waterbeds ISO?

A: We know that comfortable cows produce a lot of milk. Our goal was to make sure the cows were comfortable.

Q: Are the cows comfortable on DCC Waterbeds ISO?

A: Yes. This was a 100% good decision! We are very happy with how they work and how comfortable our cows are.

Q: What is the biggest difference between the ISO and your previous flat mats?

A: The other mats had problems. The cows had worn a pocket in the space where they laid on them and that is where the manure pooled. The ISO waterbeds go back to their original shape once the cow gets up. It is just like brand new basically every time a cow lays down.

Q: Now that the barn is more focused on comfort, have you seen overall herd health improvements?

A: It is not a fair direct comparison, but we used to put the lame cows in the bedding pack barn and that barn had a lot of issues. But I will say that we are not putting hardly as many cows into our special needs pen as compared to before. And I would also add that we have a lot of older cows that are staying around longer and coming back more lactations than before. Those were the ones we had to put on the bedding pack before just to keep them around. The new barn, including the comfort of the the waterbeds, seem to be playing a big role in overall herd health improvements.

Q: What improvements have you seen since the change to a new barn, robots, and DCC Waterbeds ISO, overall?

A: Since the move we have had a substantial increase in milk production and the cows are staying around longer because of lower SCC and leg problems. We have very few hock lesions, practically nothing. We don't have to buy cows to keep the barn filled up. I do think that the waterbeds are a big part of the success of our new system. Between the barn, the ventilation, the robots, and the waterbeds, everything is working well for overall comfort and production.

Q: Do you believe that your cows are comfortable?

A: We see a lot of cows lying down fast once they enter the stall instead of perching there for a while. And they stay there quite a bit longer than they used to. Happy cows make more milk. That is all there is to it.

Q: How has your milk production changed in the new system?

A: We were averaging 82 to 84 per cow when we were milking two times a day in an old parlor on flat mats and bedding pack. Currently, we are at 104 lb. average.

Q: How has your barn cleaning changed?

A: In our old barn we bedded twice a day with chopped straw on the mattresses, and we scraped and cleaned the stalls twice a day, too. We also had to maintain the bedding pack. Now we bed every 4th day with sawdust and some lime on the waterbeds and scrape the ends of the beds twice a day. That is our management style; we want to keep the cows clean. One of the keys to success is keeping the waterbeds dry. It's pretty easy to do now and the cows are more comfortable overall.

Q: Many producers say that they've "paid for the beds" in just a few years because of the cost savings they've realized by not buying bedding every month. When do you think your waterbeds will "pay for themselves?"

A: The bedding pack was very expensive to maintain. It was costing us on average \$1.40 per hundred weight per cow a day. I haven't figure out what it is now, but I am sure it our costs are way below that. I think with the increased production, the ISO beds will pay for themselves in 3-5 years. Our other mats had to be replaced every 7 years and the waterbeds should last at least 15 years so replacement cost is less, too.