How cows are cared for is on the mind of farmers and consumers alike. To truly benefit animals, these standards must be based on an assessment of an animal’s needs. While a focus on care is a moral requirement, it can also increase a farm’s bottom line. As one of the farmers profiled in this issue says, “If you put money into the cows, they’ll give it back.”

This month’s issue highlights research on the impact of cow comfort on cow health and productivity and profiles on-farm efforts.

Lindsay Collins outlines the Novus C.O.W.S. study, which showed that the Northeast has the highest rates of lameness and hock injuries. Tim Shelford, Cornell University, and Jackson Wright, former Cornell Cooperative Extension dairy specialist, show impact of lighting on milk production. Rick Grant, Miner Institute, shows how management and cow behavior responses impact productivity and health. Dan McFarland, Penn State Extension, outlines options to increase air exchange in older, naturally ventilated barns. Dave Balbian, Cornell Cooperative Extension, outlines impact of stall design, surface, bedding, feed mangers, water systems and lighting in tie stall barns. Dean Weidman, Ag Construction Services, outlines the importance of taking time to plan and to have the right team in place before growing a farm. Curt Gooch, PRO-DAIRY, provides recommendation to increase comfort of concrete when used as flooring in dairy barns.

The owners of Table Rock, North Harbor Dairy and Van Slyke Dairy Farm open their barns for a tour of how they approach cow comfort and the impact of improvements they have made. Lameness mitigation is a focus at Table Rock, misters are installed in all cow groups, including dry cows, at North Harbor Dairy, and dairy solids in deep bedded stalls increase lying time at Van Slyke’s Dairy Farm.

PRO-DAIRY Academy for Dairy Executives

Apply now for PRO-DAIRY’s Central NY Academy for Dairy Executives. The Academy develops dairy leadership and management skills for young professionals. Applications for the program, which begins in November, are due by October 10.

Topics covered in the three sessions over five months include: family business management and communication, financial assessment, budgeting and decision making, building effective employee teams, business risk management and strategic planning.

For more information, visit www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/academy. Email Betsey Howland at blh37@cornell.edu or call her at (607) 592-6222.