

**COW COMFORT**

PRO-DAIRY

By Julie Berry

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**INSIDE**

Cow comfort impacts health and productivity

page 19

Cool cows at North Harbor Dairy

page 20

Cow comfort economics 101

page 21

Cow comfort in tie stall barns

page 22

My farm needs to grow! But where to start?

page 24

Concrete floors in barns

page 25

Light spectrum and its implications on milk production

page 27

Measures mitigate lameness at Table Rock

page 29

Increase air exchange in naturally ventilated barns

page 30

Novus C.O.W.S. program: overview and results

page 31

Manure solids in deep beds boost comfort

page 33

# Cow Comfort Impacts Health and Productivity

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. □

**FYI**

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The Manager, a special section prepared by PRO-DAIRY specialists, is sponsored by ZOETIS and appears in *DairyBusiness* East four times a year. In keeping with the PRO-DAIRY mission, The Manager helps strengthen the management skills of dairy producers and increase the profitability of the dairy industry. PRO-DAIRY, an educational program begun in 1988, is a joint venture of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Northeast agriservice organizations. For reprints of PRO-DAIRY's The Manager, contact Heather Howland, 272 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Phone: 607.255.4478 Email: [hh96@cornell.edu](mailto:hh96@cornell.edu)