



JUNE 2021 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

On these hot days it seems like you can just feel the corn growing as it eclipses the 'Knee high by...' mark earlier again this year. Unfortunately, the wheat is now ankle high in many areas after the heavy rains and winds of this week. As you are out standing in your fields, looking at your crops, remember to not get caught with your coveralls down ignoring some seasonal maintenance items in the barn.

Mastitis – we often see a rise in milk quality investigations between July 1st and October as the heat stress and humidity in the barns adds up. Cows can usually tolerate a few days here and there as long as the evening temperature drops or the heat wave is followed by a few cooler days. But during the times of active heat stress the stalls accumulate organic matter, the water troughs get more contaminated, cross over alleys get messier and fans just stop for no reason. Up regulating the water cleanliness by scrubbing troughs and increasing availability by adding temporary troughs usually pays off in production. Many farms with cisterns should be checking to ensure the water is clean and flowing. Flow rate based treatment systems are more common and show their value in these hot conditions.

Many producers remove and replace the last 2 feet of stall real estate to drastically drop bedding bacterial counts. Try and schedule this job during a period of cooler days and nights to not further stress the cows. Increases in bacterial counts is true for all types of deep bedded stalls. See the accompanying chart from Minnesota for bedding bacterial counts in sand and non-organic bedding. There is a correlation between higher counts and risk for mastitis. Grabbing a bacterial count on you stalls may provide extra motivation to improve udder health.

Table 1: Sand (New or Recycled) or Organic Non-Manure Bedding (shavings, straw, etc.)

| | Low | Moderate | High |
|------------------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| Clean – Coliform | <500 | - | >500 |
| Klebs | 0 | - | >0 |
| Staphs | 0 | - | >0 |
| SSLO* | 0 | 1-1000 | >1000 |
| Used – Coliform | <10,000 | - | >10,000 |
| Klebs | 0 | - | >0 |
| Staphs | 0 | - | >0 |
| SSLO* | <500,000 | 500,000-2,000,000 | >2,000,000 |

*SSLO – Strep and Strep Like Organisms aka environmentals

For mats, more regular scraping and use of lime helps keep the portion of the stall the udder lays on dry. Adding bedding or increasing the amount used on mats is also going to improve surface drying and lying times.

The adoption of sprinklers has been great for cooling cows and great for cleaning floors. Take a quick walk through the lower traffic areas of the barn to look for any build up of slippery caked on manure that can be easily chipped off this time of year.

Equipment – if you have not had the milk equipment dealer out to check vacuum and pulsators now is a good time to do so. Many cows calve in June, July and August to meet incentive demand and getting

them milked out properly while in early lactation will reduce the risk of a moderate case of mastitis turning into a severe case. The greatest risk for a case of mastitis is a previous case of mastitis so prevention is the key! The goal at milk harvest is to attach a proper functioning unit to a clean, dry and plump teat. Monitor your equipment and have a refresher course for your milk harvest technicians to keep the milk flowing! Any testing should also include a dynamic test during milking to assess claw vacuum at peak flow. Flaming the udders, addressing foot issues and trimming tails are all items that make the people in the parlour happier. This is also true for AMS barns as teat dipping, take off settings and feed trays all need attention these days.

TMR mixer – audit, audit, audit!

Now is a good time to measure how much stay at home, eat at home covid-19 weight you have shed with all the sweaty work being done on the farm. Hop in the mixer and check that your scale is accurate (or send your feed rep in!). While you're in there check the kicker plates and the knives for wear and tear. This is the second most regularly used item on the farm after the vacuum pump and the most impactful on the bottom line, its worth a look. And take a moment to clean off the magnet, it is amazing what farmers are showing us they have removed.

With reduced DMI's, sorting and maximized bunk space it is even more important to check the ration has been mixed and delivered as best as it can be. This is especially true for the transition cow ration, the fresh cow ration, the lactating ration, the far-off ration, the heifer rations...

There are several little things that add up to big things in this weather and although we talk about fans, fans, fans, there are other details that will improve how these cows fair through July and August.

We hope everyone can enjoy a cold beer, a hot fudge sundae and some quality family time as we head towards 'normal' and a great second half of 2021!