



DAIRYINFO

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Taking service to another level!

Heat Stress in Dairy Cows (II)

It happens every year. Yet, it still helps for us to be reminded regularly about the impact of heat stress on dairy cows and livestock. Throughout the summer months and often into the early fall, heat and humidity plague both man and beast! Dairy cows are susceptible to the impact of this combination, often struggling to keep cool and maintain regular bodily functions. In order to help prevent the effects of heat stress – both immediate and long term, we need to work proactively at keeping cows comfortable and as cool as possible. There are several things we can do to help ensure a more positive outcome before and throughout these conditions. These include:

- Providing adequate fresh clean water at all times. It is critically important to make sure any watering devices or tanks are thoroughly and regularly cleaned, while being kept filled at all times.
- Shaded areas are helpful in locations where cows tend to congregate, whether a dry lot or pasture, loafing area or walkways to and from the parlor – especially if there is little-to-no relief from direct sun.
- Fans and misters (in lower humidity areas) and various coolers are very effective tools to help lower cows' body temperatures during periods of heat stress.
- Plan to feed more frequently, as recommended by several studies. Consider feeding in the cooler times of the day and evening, and pushing up feed more often than usual, which can also encourage more feed intake.
- In order to limit the physiological risks linked to heat stress and in particular rumen acidosis, the ration should be reviewed and adjusted as needed: a more palatable diet; quality, highly digestible forages and more fermentable fiber; the possible inclusion of DCAD-Plus, etc. In order to help prevent acidosis, the ration can be enhanced with ruminant-specific live yeast. Rumen-specific live yeast may include *Saccharomyces Cerevisiae* CNCMI-1077 or other approved yeast strains. I can provide more information about these products and others, while taking time to review your rations this summer.
- Finally, intakes of anti-oxidants should be increased.

Assessing your entire herd is important both ahead of periods of heat and humidity, as well as throughout the summer. This should include your calves, replacement heifers, and dry/transition cows. Too often, we concentrate on the lactating portion of the herd and neglect the remaining animals. It is important to address

concerns with every group on your farm, helping to ensure they also remain as stress free as possible during times of heat and humidity.

Calves are sometimes among the first to experience heat stress on the farm. They are often housed in areas with little-to-no protection from the sun or other weather-related concerns. Even though many calf hutches have ventilation in the top, this is not sufficient when temperatures and humidity soar, trapping heat inside and permitting little escape for the young animal. Good ventilation all year-round is critical – especially during the 'dog days' of summer. Additionally, make sure they have continual access to fresh clean water. Even very young calves will benefit from drinking water. If possible, provide some relief from exposure to direct sun, whether using shade cloth, natural shade from trees, or inside a well-ventilated building.

Growing heifers benefit from more open areas where they can appreciate physical activity, which helps to promote growth and development. Usually this is a pasture or paddock. The impact of heat stress on this group of animals can be a deterrent to good physiological development, weight gains and overall health. If they experience the impact of heat stress, it could delay their breeding for 24-month calving and entering the lactating herd, which is a loss of both time and money.

Last – but certainly not least – dry and transition cows. In many herds they are located "in the back 40" and other than an occasional check, may be more-or-less forgotten. This is an important time in the life cycle of dairy cows, a time when nutrition and comfort is just as necessary as when they calve and reenter the lactating herd. Whatever the circumstances, take time to consider where these cows are located and what they may need for cooling: continuous clean fresh water, access to shade, sufficient forage (if dry conditions prevail, available grass may be limited), etc.

Keep your cows cool this summer and appreciate results not only through the heat and humidity, but into the fall and winter months as well.



*Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows?
Call us! Our goal is to help you - the W-S Feed commitment!*

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We want to ensure you get the most current information available on dairy management and ration balancing, along with the best in personalized, professional service and quality products. It is a pleasure to work with you all throughout the year. Ask us today for more information about the products and services we represent... along with how W-S can serve your needs and concerns, both now and in the future!

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JUNE 2015

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JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH!

CHECK IT OUT!

