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Watch out for Silo Gas

Silo gas forms as newly stored silage ferments. It can cause serious injuries, severe respiratory distress, permanent lung damage, and even death. In late summer and early fall, when silos are being filled, the danger is at its peak. Corn forms more silo gas than other crops. Silo gas begins to form immediately after forage is put into a silo. This gas includes nitrogen oxide, which changes to nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) in the presence of oxygen. Nitrogen dioxide, not to be confused with nitrous oxide or "laughing gas", is a highly corrosive, toxic gas, which forms nitric acid when mixed with water. It is heavier than air and displaces oxygen. Silo gas also contains carbon dioxide, which is not toxic, but is [also] heavier than air and displaces oxygen. When inhaled, the nitrogen dioxide in silo gas mixes with the moisture in the body, forming nitric acid. This causes severe burning and scarrring in the lungs and other parts of the respiratory system. Since it is heavier than air, silo gas will settle on the surface of the silage and flow down silo chutes.
Individuals exposed to silo gas may collapse and die from the gas and lack of oxygen. They may go into respiratory distress, fall down the silo/silo chute or even receive respiratory burns. Symptoms may/may not be evident immediately. Anyone who has been exposed to (or potentially exposed to) silo gas should get fresh air immediately and see a doctor, even if they feel 'better' after getting some fresh air. Prevention is critical to begin with, but proactive care is also essential. To prevent silo gas exposure, the following steps are recommended:

1. Stay out of the silo for 2-3 weeks after filling. This is the peak period of silo gas formation. Keep the silo room closed off from the rest of the barn, and ventilate it to remove any gas that may flow down the chute.

2. Before entering a silo for the first time, run the forage blower for 30 minutes, and leave it running while inside. Also, ventilate the chute and silo room. Always have someone else with you outside the silo to go for help if needed.

3. If you must enter a silo to level off or set up an unloader after filling, do so immediately after the last load is in. Do not wait until after supper or the next day. Run the blower while you are inside.

4. Be aware that the forage blower air may not adequately ventilate a partly filled silo, since silo gas settles down on the surface. Leave silo doors open to allow gas to escape, but be sure to close off and ventilate the silo room.

5. Invest in portable gas monitors to test for nitrogen dioxide and oxygen levels. This is the only way to be certain the atmosphere is safe to enter.

(Edited from an article by M. Rankin, U of WI Extension)

Calves and Cold

As temperatures begin to drop it is important to ensure your calves get the energy and nutrition they need to maintain body temperature and growth. One way to help ensure these demands are met is to increase the amount of MILK REPLACER they receive each day, along with a quality calf starter . Ask me about an easy-to-use chart that can help calculate the needs of your calves as temperatures decline this fall and winter. This program can have a positive impact on your calves now… and in the future. Call us today for details! You'll appreciate the results.

TIME TO DEWORK YOUR LIVESTOCK

Winter is coming… and this is an excellent time to deworm your livestock. Worms can cause loss of weight, reduce the rate of gain, and may create other health concerns. Consider deworming ~ an investment that makes a difference. Ask me for details today.

FUTURES MARKET

BEEF

OCTOBER	152.45
DECEMBER	155.52
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OCTOBER	105.70
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Observing Cows Makes A Difference

How much time do you spend watching your cows? Observing your cows on a regular basis is important. Consider these things:

Two hours before milking, are less than 20% standing in stalls? *This is a reflection of cow comfort. A comfortable cow will spend at least 12 hours a day resting (lying down). The longer they stand the greater chance of developing lameness problems. Comfort improves production!*

When walking through the milking herd, are 50 to 70% of the cows chewing their cuds? *Healthy cows chew their cud. This acts as a buffer to feeds and can help increase dry matter intake, helping to prevent lameness, DAs, etc.*

Just before feeding, take a few minutes to look in the feedbunk and see if it still contains quality feed - not just cobs or long-stemmed fiber. When you feed, are there cows waiting for their turn to get to the feedbunk for something to eat? *It is important to keep feed in front of cows all the time. More feed intake often means more milk.*

Are water troughs clean, easily accessible after milking, and do they provide an adequate supply of water for all cows to drink? *Fresh, clean water encourages intakes and aids feed digestion. Make sure there are sufficient water tanks for all your cows!*

Reasons Why Cows Don't Eat

Here are some reasons why cows don't eat. Keep in mind that it isn't always the ration.

⇨ **WATER –** do your cows get enough water, and is the water fresh and clean? Make sure water is available at all times, and that water troughs are cleaned and maintained on a regular basis. Water quality is also something to have checked periodically.

⇨ **FACILITIES –** do your facilities make eating difficult? Can cows access feed readily and is there feed in front of them all the time? Quality and availability matter.

⇨ **RESTING AREAS –** make sure cows have adequate room to lie down, using appropriate bedding materials that offer comfort. It is important that these areas are kept dry and clean.

⇨ **FEET PROBLEMS –** is lameness a problem on your farm? Are feet trimmed regularly?

⇨ **MASTITIS –** this potentially impacts feed intake, as well as the health and well being of your cows. Evaluation of milking procedures can sometimes help to detect and reduce the incidence of mastitis in your herd.

⇨ **VENTILATION –** no matter what time of year it is, cows benefit from good ventilation.

⇨ **LABOR –** make certain that your labor force does what is expected. This can have a big impact on how your cows perform. Policies and procedures, as well as protocols for feeding and milking, will benefit your productivity!

Grain Bin Housekeeping

Since grain can be in contact with storage bins for a long time, pay extra attention to cleaning these structures before storing the new crop. Here are a few "tips" to consider as you prepare for the coming season:

Remove any grain/grain dust from inside bins by sweeping or vacuuming empty bins and brushing down walls.

Pay close attention to cracks, crevices, ledges over doors and hollow-tube ladder rungs on or in which grain could be trapped from previous storage seasons.

Clear debris from fans, aeration ducts, exhausts, and when possible, beneath slotted floors.

Dispose of all debris in a lawful manner and away from the storage facility.

Sanitation outside of bins is just as important as cleaning the inside of bins.

Inspect storage structures for signs of deterioration. Check for leaks/holes through which insects, birds or rodents can gain easy access to stored grain; or where rain/snow can drip or blow in onto the grain, producing wet spots that lead to mold growth.

Do not allow vegetation (weeds, shrubs, etc.) to grow up against the outside of the bin, as this can harbor insects and rodents.

Bare ground covered with gravel or cement is preferred, but short-mown grass is tolerable.

Remove any spilled grain from around the outside of the bin and storage facility

(Edited from an article by Curtis Young, OH State University Extension, 2012)

How Safe Is Your Maternity Area

The location of your maternity pen is important. Of course, this depends on the size of your herd and available space/facilities. If possible, it is recommended that maternity areas are located away from your lactating herd, especially from any isolation pens that may be used for new arrivals or sick animals. On many dairies, maternity pens are located near animals that need to be isolated due to sickness or for observation. This becomes an added concern with regard to possible infectious diseases. Young calves are more susceptible to disease and pathogens, making isolation a practical solution. Without segregation, the potential spread of disease becomes more of a reality, which can impact your entire operation and profitability. Maternity pens and calf hutches should be positioned as far from the lactating herd as possible! Also, it is good idea to place maternity pens and hutches away from all other cows (lactating or dry), or places where disease may more readily spread. Additional concerns in the spread of disease, which need to be considered, include farm dogs and cats, as well as birds and rodents. Young calves are best raised alone; however, when this is not possible, housing them in small groups with other calves about the same size and age can be beneficial. Placing young calves with older ones is not recommended. Where do your cows calve? Consider maternity and calf housing that will benefit your operation.