



*From the desk's of Dr. Leon Roggenbuck &
Dr. Michelle Borek-Stine... January 1, 2015*

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I have been a dairy veterinarian for over 22 years. In this time I have seen a lot of improvements in the dairy industry. New products and procedures have come along that have helped us to profitably impact your dairies. The value of these products and procedures, however, pales in comparison to the value of the knowledge we have gained by looking at how successful farms transition dry cows.

Ken Nordland and the group at the University of Wisconsin have identified many keys to successful transition. Here are the top 5 items your **cows** need in the 21 days pre-fresh and 14 to 21 days after calving:

- 30 inches of feed bunk space
- Deep sand bedded stalls
- 50 in. wide and 9 ft. long free stalls
- Reduced social turmoil by decreasing frequency of pen moves
- Quiet, low impact and competent screening for sick fresh cows

The power of the data that they have to support these recommendations is beyond reproach. Some of these recommendations are expensive to employ. All efforts to economically justify their implementation show that the payoff is huge. Dr. Nordland shared an example of an already above average dairy that made an addition \$153,000 investment in their transition cow facilities. This investment cost \$40 per cow for the next 5 years. It returned \$180 dollars per cow annually.

Most of you have already heard these recommendations several times. My goal is to bring to light what I believe is the ultimate lesson for these studies. Anxiety in our cows is the enemy to success on our dairy farms. Think about this...Why on earth does a pre-fresh cow need 30 inches of bunk space? She has all day to lie around and eat. The fact is she does not feel comfortable coming up to the feed bunk on her own. She feels safer being with the other cows and doing what they are doing. In the wild, prey animals are at risk while feeding. Their head is down so their vision is impaired. They are grinding their food loudly so their hearing is impaired. Being together as a group greatly increases the odds that at least one of them will see or hear a predator. The animal that felt comfortable eating alone was singled out by predators and did not live to pass along its DNA. This behavior is still hard wired genetically into our cows.

The anxiety that we cause by asking cows to do such a simple thing as eating on their own elevates cortisol levels and suppresses their immune system.. Dropping a placenta, cleaning up a uterus, killing mastitis and respiratory pathogens are all critical functions of the immune system. Anxiety very effectively elevates cortisol levels and instantly suppresses the function of the immune system.

The benefits of a calm quiet environment extend well beyond the transition period. Rough handling, (often by well-intended, but poorly trained employees), loud sudden noises, large chaotic holding pens and poor milking procedures all cause anxiety in our lactating cows on a daily basis. Best case scenario, this means she eats a few less pounds of feed and makes a few less pounds of high profit marginal milk. Worst case scenario, she succumbs to coliform mastitis, pneumonia, salmonella, etc.

Seek out and eliminate sources of anxiety on your dairy. Your cows, your employees and you will greatly benefit.
Happy New Year...Dr. Leon Roggenbuck

2015 Winter Producer Meetings are being scheduled for February & March.

Starting in January, we will have monthly Herdsperson and calf management meetings. Each meeting will have a different focus that we will cover. A few examples would be identifying sick cows, the art of the physical exam, metabolic disease processes, quality milk and somatic cell issues, mastitis treatment and effectiveness, employee management of cultural diverse teams. On the calf side topics will include; scours/diarrhea how age defines the disease, sudden death, colostrums timing and its effect on calf health. Of course we are open to suggestions. The Herdsperson meeting will be the first Wednesday of each month and calf meeting will be the 3rd Wednesday of each month with a start time of 5 P.m. at our office at 60 E Miller Rd, Sandusky. The cost will be \$35 per person. Please RSVP with Carrie at 810-376-2425 ext 102, a light dinner will be served. This is a new venture for us, we are open to suggestions and scheduling changes.

The first meeting will be Wednesday, January 21 on calf scours. Let's start the year out right!

Final housekeeping details, the milk processing plants have been requesting written protocols on animal health and handling. Be prepared at your next herd visit to sit down with your veterinarian to go over your protocols. We have binders with what we think is all the necessary paperwork, it just needs to be tailored to your farm.