

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Biosecurity for Show Animals: Consider These Practices**

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The Manitowoc County Fair is just days away and so is the potential to bring disease organisms back to the farm. The following are some management practices suggested by UW-Extension Veterinarian Dr. Shelia McGuirk and Dairy Youth Specialist Ted Halbach to help you to have a “healthy” show experience and not to bring any unwanted bugs back to the farm:

#### **Sanitation Practices**

1. Keep pens dry and clean
2. Use appropriate disinfecting agents. There are many effective disinfectants. The appropriate selection is based in part on the diseases that pose the highest risk to your animal. One effective and economical solution contains 1 ounce of household bleach in 1 gallon of water. These solutions are most effective when they are applied to surfaces that are free of soil, manure, straw, or other organic debris and when the surface to which they are applied is not porous. A minimum contact time of 30 minutes is desirable.

#### **Livestock Isolation**

1. Disinfect Trailers. Trailers and trucks used to transport cattle to the show should be steam-cleaned and disinfected prior to and immediately after hauling the show animals.
2. Have proper ventilation.
3. Use adequate stall space.
4. Do not use community watering troughs.
5. Minimize nose to nose contact. Animal density is usually high in show barns but there should be adequate space to avoid nose to nose contact among animals from different show strings. When using wash racks, tie animals so the nose to nose contact is avoided.
6. Disinfect common equipment. When using communal facilities and equipment, take realistic precautions.
7. Isolation – post show. When animals return from the show, they should remain isolated from other animals until they have been adequately transitioned to a normal diet, are eating and drinking normally, have no evidence of infection (normal temperature, nasal discharge, and appetite) and are at minimum risk of getting sick. The incubation period for the diseases that are most likely to be acquired at a show is three to ten days. Animals that show no sign of infection ten days after a show are of minimal risk to other animals at home.

## Environment Mastitis

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Thanks to Dr. Gerald Jones, Virginia Tech, for the following article.

Well managed dairy herds with low somatic cell counts (SCC below 200-300,000) often may experience problems with onsets of clinical mastitis. Approximately 40-45% of the mastitis cases in low SCC herds are caused by environmental pathogens which can be difficult to detect because of their short duration. Cows in low SCC herds are most susceptible to environmental streptococci and coliform (E. coli, Klebsiella) infections after drying off and just prior to calving but which appear in early lactation.

The main factor in controlling infection from the environment is to keep cows clean and dry between milkings, minimizing opportunity for teats to become exposed to environmental pathogens. Dirty teats and udders are difficult to properly clean and dry without upsetting the milking routine.

These infections are usually associated with wet and dirty conditions that expose teat ends to bacterial contamination. Dirty housing and calving environments, certain types of bedding materials, improper or inadequate cow preparation for milking and milk letdown, and conditions within milking systems that create liner slips during milking are all factors that can potentially lead to mastitis. Infections by environmental pathogens can be reduced by dry cow therapy, pre- and post-milking teat dipping, clean teats and udders where hair has been removed, proper preparation for milking, milking system maintenance, fly control, and controlling mastitis in heifers at calving.

Pathogen identification and treatment records are important. Dietary supplementation with vitamin E and selenium during the late dry period can affect immunity levels of cows and heifers.

## Have You Reviewed Your Bedding Management?

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Well bedded and managed stalls are critical to comfort and highly productive cows. This is true whether cows are housed in free stall or tie-stall barns. Some factors to consider with bedding management include:

**Crowding** - this is obviously a free stall barn problem. Overcrowding free stalls results in additional manure being deposited in the scrape alleys. This manure is more likely to be dragged by the cow's hooves onto the free stall base. Overcrowding also results in more time spent standing, which can result in hoof problems and alley layers (cows that are forced to lay in the scrape alley). An increased incidence of mastitis often occurs.

**Stall Cleanliness** - Cleaning the back 1/3 of the stall surface at least every time the cows are milked is an effective way to maintain cow cleanliness and prevent mastitis. Raking back clean bedding will also help keep the teats and udders clean. This will result in faster milking, since less time is needed to clean the teats prior to milking.

Research has shown that dairy herds with somatic cell counts (SCC) less than 150,000 cleaned the stalls an average of 2.2 times per day compared to 1.6 times per day for dairy herds with an average SCC of over 250,000.

**Freestall Barn Scrape Alleys** - Clean the alleys whenever possible, but at a minimum every time the cows are milked. Manure build-up in scrape alleys where the cows are milked twice daily can be 50% higher than herds that milk three times each day. If excessive manure builds up in the alleys between milking, one may want to consider the installation of alley scrapers.

**Bedding Frequency** - Adding clean and dry bedding on a regular basis is essential. In my experience, many free stalls are inadequately bedded. Some producers who have mattresses in their stalls use very little if any bedding. The result can be dirty teats and udders and hock abrasions. As indicated earlier, removing wet and soiled bedding from the back 1/3 of the stall and replacing it with clean bedding each milking (or when needed) is a proven way to reduce high bacteria loads that way increase the level of mastitis in your herd.

**Hot Weather** - Although slow in coming this year, hot weather will ultimately arrive and with it is the potential for increased bacterial populations in the bedding you use. Even producers who use sand bedding must remove contaminated sand to reduce bacterial loads that can cause mastitis.

**Drying Agents** - Some dairy producers use drying agents, including hydrated lime, in an attempt to dry out the portion of the stall that comes in direct contact with the cow's udder. Any thing that can be safely done to dry -out the stall surface is beneficial as long as it is cost effective. People using hydrated lime should be aware that it is extremely dusty and can irritate one's eyes, nasal passage and mouth. Some companies market products that are designed to reduce moisture content in the stall.

In summary, maintaining cow-friendly stalls can result in better herd health, more productive cows and an improved bottom line. For more information on ways to improve cow comfort, feel free to contact the Manitowoc County UW-Extension Office at 683-4168.

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