

# MEDICINE AND MANAGEMENT

By CARL TROOP, VMD



## Confined animals require better management

Cold weather brings a whole new series of management problems and decisions to be made regarding the health of the livestock. And most of these problems arise not because of the cold weather but because the animals need to be confined to a greater degree than during the warmer periods of the year.

Confinement is not a necessity. Many animals will do as well or better in the open as long as there is some protection from the harshest weather, adequate water available at all times, and a little extra feed to compensate for the extra energy needed to maintain body temperature.

For the animals confined to buildings, however, the challenge to keep them healthy requires more and better management, precautions, and constant vigilance. The advice of "clean, dry, well ventilated and free from drafts" must have been written and read thousands of times. But their importance; especially "well ventilated and free from drafts," cannot be stressed too much.

"Clean" is most important for infant animals as the newborn is very susceptible to many diseases. As it develops strength and matures it also picks up resistance to many of the diseases that constantly challenge it, and cleanliness becomes less important. Not that one should become sloppy and allow the animals to wallow in sludge, but the time which one can allot to keeping areas clean should be concentrated on the areas where the very young are raised.

"Dry" needs no explanation. Again, this is most important for the very young but should not be neglected at any age.

"Well ventilated and free from drafts" is most important at any age. Animals in a confined area without adequate ventilation are asking for trouble. They are constantly breathing the gases and fumes from their own feces and urine. Ammonia and the other gases are very irritating to the lungs and makes them very susceptible to any infectious organism which may be present. They are constantly rebreathing their own air instead of fresh air, depleting the amount of oxygen and increasing the amount of toxic gases taken in. Just remember, if you walk into a building or pen and feel the slightest bit uncomfortable because of stuffiness, stagnant air, or air that is actually burning to the nose, these animals are living under these conditions 24 hours a day. They cannot just walk away from it. These are the places where the animals are often sick or just not doing well, treated and treated and treated, only to hear that the medicine just must not be any good.

So what to do about poor ventilation. Open some windows or knock a hole in the wall? In comes bad Mr. Draft. What is a draft? If you are standing in a building and can feel air moving against your body that feels cool to the body, you are in a draft. Again, if you feel chilled or uncomfortable, remember the animals are under those conditions 24

hours a day. Drafts cause chills and excess heat loss and are particularly harmful if the animals are in a wet environment yet. The only time drafts are not particularly harmful is when the weather is hot (80's or 90's or

higher) that the air moving over the body is not appreciably cooler than the body surface itself.

What, then is good ventilation? Good ventilation is providing fresh air circulated in such a manner

that one cannot tell that the air is moving. Exhaust fans are ideal for this. Fresh air is drawn in through cracks and crevices and small openings and drifts through the building, replacing the older air as it is expelled. Windows and doors can be used to provide ventilation in the absence of fans, but should always be opened on the side or sides away from the prevailing winds at the time. This requires much attention as a shift in the wind may require some to be closed or others to be opened during the course of a day. Always check for drafts in any area where there will be animals.

When planning new buildings this should be one of the prime considerations, adequate ventilation. Consultation with the Ex-

tension office or other qualified individual will be the most profitable time spent in the design of a new building.

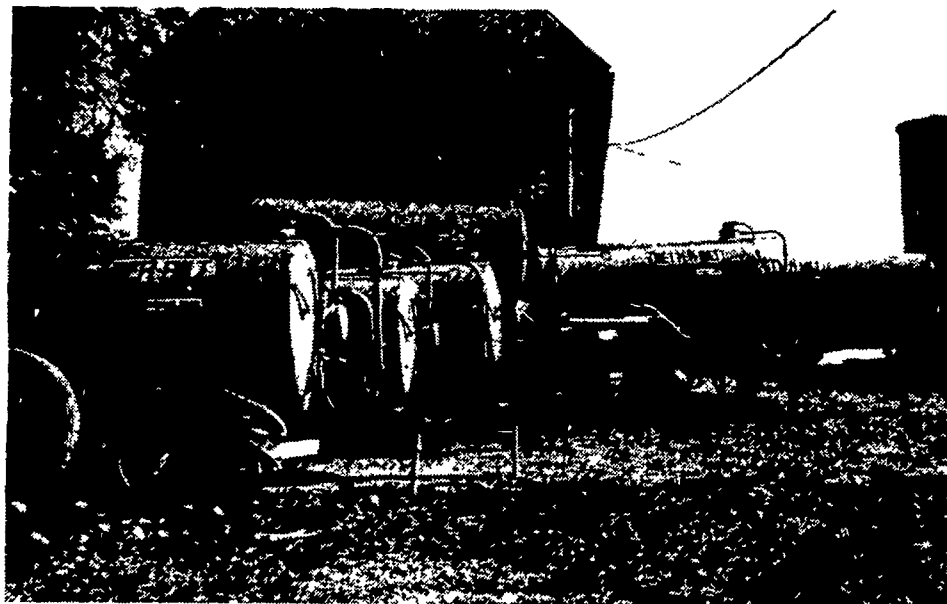
Clean, dry, well ventilated and free from drafts. These eight words are the key towards healthy confinement at any time of the year.

xxx

Aflatoxins are a metabolism byproduct from a common mold or fungus. They occur primarily in feed grains and high-energy feed products. Such contamination has been running high this Fall in harvested corn from Georgia, Florida and certain other states in the Southeast. But it does not appear to be a serious problem in Maryland-grown corn.

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