

Think Like A Cow To Achieve Cow Comfort

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. (Centre Co.) — Is your milking parlor cow-friendly? If you're not sure, take a cow's eye look at what milking looks, sounds and feels like on your farm, suggests an animal housing expert in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Crouch down and examine your milking parlor from the cow's point of view," says Dr. Robert Graves, professor of agricultural engineering. "This will help you identify factors that may make your cows uncooperative, endanger their safety or interfere with the milking routine."

Rough handling, slippery floors, shaky, uncomfortable grates or protruding pipes or bars can upset cows and disrupt milking.

Factors to consider include:

- walking and standing surfaces in barns, lanes, holding areas and on parlor platforms.
- walls, fences, gates, doors and doorways
- parlor hardware and appliances
- animal catching and separa-

tion areas

- lighting
- noise
- people and animals, such as visitors, children and dogs.

Because cows walk on their hooves, they are at great risk of slipping. "Treat walking surfaces to provide friction without irritating, abrading, puncturing or otherwise injuring the hard and soft parts of the cow's foot," Graves says.

"It's common for milking parlors to use grooved floors to improve friction, but the floor should have no sharp concrete or aggregate edges sticking up to injure the hoof. If the floor's too rough for your bare feet, it's probably too rough for your cows."

Cows have panoramic vision of more than 300 degrees, which means they can be easily distracted by things people don't see. "Objects or activities to the side or rear may be very troublesome to a cow," Graves says.

Cattle also have limited depth perception, especially at ground level. "Cows often lower their heads and stop to get a better look

at strange items on the ground," Graves says. "They may balk at drains, grates, hoses, shadow lines or changes in floor texture because they can't see them very well."

Cows readily adapt to reasonable levels of continuous noise, such as a radio, but are more sensitive than people to high frequency noises. "People hear in the 1000 to 3000 hz level," says Graves. "A cow's hearing is most sensitive at 8000 hz. Sudden loud noises, such as banging metal gates or loud exhaust from air cylinders, can bother them."

Cows, like people, have a personal space, referred to as the flight zone. "People or dogs in a cow's flight zone may make her uncomfortable and discourage her from moving through the parlor," says Graves.

Since cows are herd animals, they can become agitated when isolated. "Pens and other methods for separating animals are necessary to contain them, but allowing cows to see other cattle nearby will help them stay calm."

Also make sure your gates,

fences and other containment facilities are strong enough to do the job. "Once a cow successfully escapes over or through poorly

constructed gates and fences, she will try it again," Graves says. "Subsequent attempts may lead to injury or damage."

Kroeck's Advice

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good because the price of the milk is down. You really need to look at the increased supplies in milk over the last 10 years and the increase in total consumption.

"I'd really be concerned if we hadn't have increased sales. (Before the dairy promotion program) the consumption trend of dairy products for years had been dropping rapidly. Yet, as soon as the large amount of dollars has come in to promote dairy products, sales have gone up.

"The whole agricultural process is very complex. People who grew up on the farm 20 years ago don't realize what farmers are facing today. They need to file a farm plan, be licensed to use pesticides, things are constantly changing. Computers keep track of records. I

don't know how we ever did it before without computers."

Karl said changes will occur in the future, too.

"You're going to see a lot of technology, particularly biotechnology. Whenever I go on one of these trips to farm meetings, particularly when I fly over the cities, I see all the growth, the houses. I can see the farms deteriorate, yet we're feeding more and more people all the time. Some day there may even be a shortage of food."

Although farming has undoubtedly become more difficult, with operating costs rising so drastically that no room is left for error, Karl sees a ray of hope.

"Ultimately, farmers will have to get more out of the market place for their products."

Md. Land Preservation

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am pleased we could purchase these easements which keeps our state number one in the nation in the number of acres saved for agriculture," Walker said.

"Governor William Donald Schaefer has always been a strong supporter of our agricultural preservation efforts. His determination is a strong reason why Maryland remains in the forefront of these efforts to save farmland as we move into the next century," said Walker.

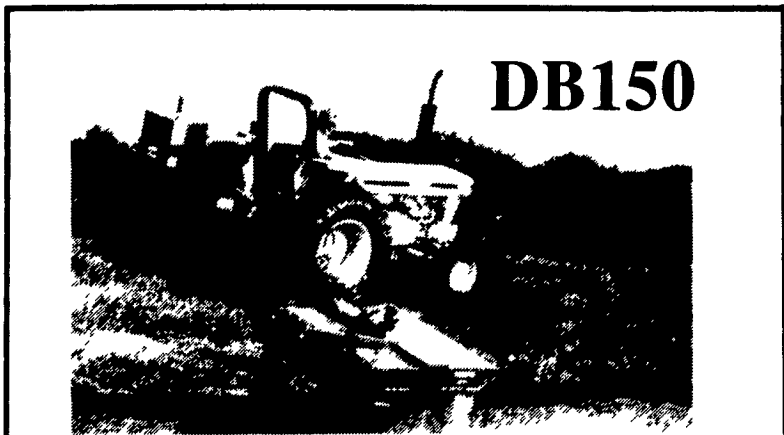
In making the announcement, Walker noted that Gerald Redden of Worcester County, with the selling of the development rights easements on his 241-acre farm, was the person who pushed the state over the 100,000 acre milestone.

"Farmers like Mr. Redden in every area of our state have demonstrated a tremendous commitment to preserving agricultural land for future generations. This will have positive long-range consequences both for the economy and environmental quality of life for all Marylanders," Walker said.

For more information on the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, contact Paul Scheidt, executive director at the Maryland Department of Agriculture, 50 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401, (410) 841-5860.



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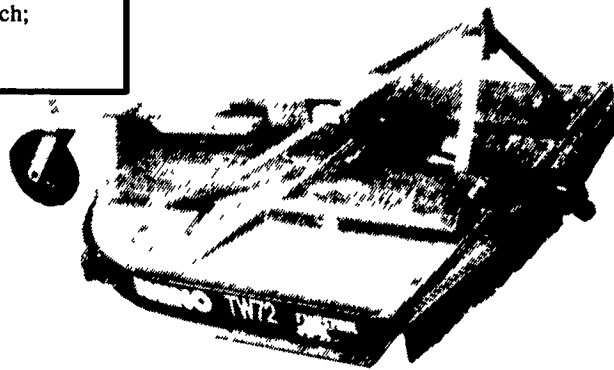
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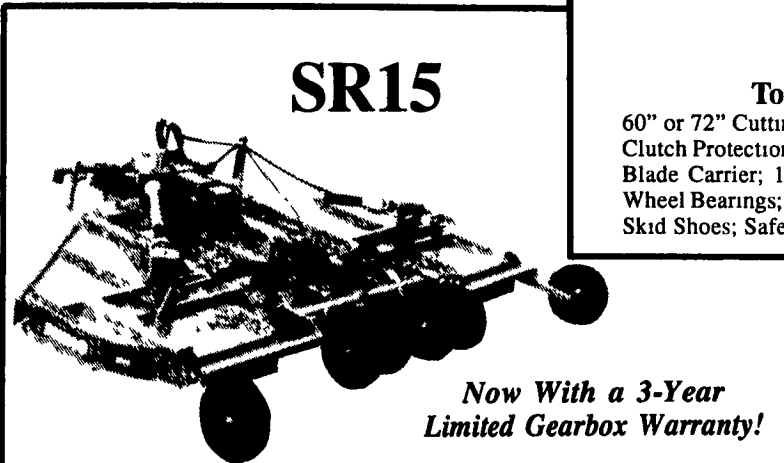
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