

# Glenn's Udderings

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Keeping high producing cows on feed, keeping them milking well and breeding well, and keeping them healthy and alive can be a challenge during the hot mucky days of summer. High producing cows generate a lot of body heat, and as herds continue to become more productive the impact of heat stress becomes more costly. Some of these costs are immediately visible; others are less visible and continue to be felt for several months after the heat spell is over. The cost of heat stress appears in the form of lost production, reduced conception rates, higher breeding and vet bills, higher cull-

ing rates and perhaps higher cell counts and lower fat tests. How costly can this become? This will vary greatly from farm to farm and from year to year. To get a handle on these costs let's make the following assumptions and estimate what they could be for a 60-cow herd averaging 65 lbs. of milk per cow per day:  
•The "heat stress" period lasts 2 months.  
•Milk production per cow per day drops 10 lbs. but is reduced by 5 lbs. with good ventilation and good management.  
•Milk income over feed cost is \$7 per cwt.  
•12 cows (20% of the herd) come into heat during the "heat

stress" period, and their calving interval can be reduced 42 days (2 heat periods) with good ventilation and good management.  
•Breeding and vet costs can be reduced \$40.00 per head for these 12 cows.  
•Cows in the last 2 months of an extended lactation average 20 lbs. less milk than they did for the first 300-330 days in milk.  
•Heat-stress culling rates can be reduced by 3 cows (5% of the herd) with good ventilation and good management.  
•Each involuntary cull represents an \$800 loss to the farmer (\$1200 replacement cost or the sale value of a dairy cow or heifer minus \$400 for a cull cow equals \$800).

•Fat tests can be improved 1 point with good ventilation and improved intakes, thereby increasing milk prices by \$0.06 per cent. Let's now use these figures and itemize how much total cost might be reduced for the herd with good ventilation and good management:  
•Reduce drop in milk production

\$1,260  
(60 cows x 5 lb. per day x 60 days x \$0.07 per lb.= \$1,260.00)

•Higher milk price due to higher fat test

140  
(60 cows x 65 cents per cow x 60 days x \$0.06=\$140.00)

•Reduced calving interval  
1,186  
(12 cows x 20 lb. less milk per day x 42 days x \$0.07 per lb.= \$705.60)  
(12 cows x \$40 savings in vet and breeding costs=\$480.00)

•Fewer involuntary culls  
2,400  
(3 less heat-stress culls x \$800=2,400)

•Total reduction in heat stress losses  
\$4,986

The figures shown above are estimates of the reduction in heat stress costs that might be possible

with good ventilation and good management.

They do not represent the total cost of heat stress, which would be greater. As mentioned before, these costs can vary a lot from farm to farm and from year to year.

How much these costs can be reduced will also vary a lot depending in part upon feeding and herd management practices and upon the effectiveness of the ventilation system. Thus, it is important to use your own figures when making estimates for your farm.

These figures are intended to serve as a guide to help you estimate your costs and how much you can afford to spend to provide your cows more comfort during the hot mucky days of summer.

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