

Conference Points

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be yanked out, noted Bechard. The sand will be replaced by sawdust. "The heifers absolutely hate them," he said. "They were raised on a sandy bed stall and moved in. We actually got heifers that refused to lie down for 3-4 days. Some had swollen feet."

Proponents of sand point out how much more comfortable the sand is and controls disease pathogens much better. But sand/manure management is another issue.

For those who want to improve profitability, investing in a more efficient facility has a direct effect on improving labor costs, according to Jason Karszes, farm management specialist with the Pro Dairy Program at Cornell.

"When designing replacement facilities, design for labor efficiency," Karszes told those attending the conference. Don't make the decision on the capitol investment cost only — consider the long-term, collective labor cost that could directly impact the bottom

Impact of Housing Style on Investment per Animal, Labor Costs, Labor Efficiency and Total Costs¹

	Investment Per Animal \$	Labor Cost Per Animal \$	Labor Efficiency Heifers/hour	Total Cost ¹ \$
CALF FACILITIES⁶				
Exp 1 28 Hutches	\$285.71	\$1.14	8.81	\$1.27
Exp 2, Roof Over 20 Hutches	\$882.5	\$.77	13	\$1.17
Exp 3, 4 Row Calf Pens In Barn	\$700	\$.55	18.31	\$.835
Exp 4, Totally Con Environment	\$643.83	\$.44	22.5	\$.668
Exp 5, 2 Row Calf Pens	\$353	\$.39	25.87	\$.552
LARGE HEIFER FACILITIES⁵				
Exp 6, Outside In Pasture	\$376.4	\$.083	121	\$.217
Exp 7, 4 Row Freestall, Outside Feeding, 140 Animals	\$452	\$.071	140	\$.231
Exp 8, 4 row Freestall, Outside Feeding, 303 animals	\$381	\$.046	213	\$.181

¹Total building costs for this project represent the costs associated with using a particular facility. These costs are building overhead, building operation, labor, and bedding.

This table, prepared by Jason Karszes of Cornell, shows how total costs per animal decreases with expansion of facilities.

line.

In some cases, the bigger the facility, "the generally cheaper it is per animal," he said.

The goal, he noted, was to produce the highest quality animal at the lowest cost. "Don't sacrifice quality for lower cost," Karszes said.

When designing facilities, according to McFarland of Penn State, design those that can provide good care for animals but that also allow ease of management for the caretaker. And provide adequate spacing for the heifers.

"The less space you give the animal, the dirtier that group is going to become," McFarland said.

It's important to match the size of the stall to the animals using them. A drier, packed surface, is better for foot health.

McFarland also said that keeping SAW in mind — short for "Shade, Air, and Water" — can go a long way to reducing heat stress in summertime. Provide good feeding space for TMR (6 inches for calves 4-8 months old, 12 inches for 11.5-15.5 months, and 18.5 inches for calves 17-21

months old). Keep the feed area open, smooth, and free of debris.

A stable walking surface, concrete with a texture (such as parallel groove or diamond shapes) can be critical.

When determining what to charge for the calves raised, producers should include the cost of education and training, according to Peter Tozer, assistant professor of animal science, Penn State.

Tozer spoke about what it takes for producers to make a living.

He noted that, when you purchase a pickup truck, the cost of educating and training assembly line workers goes into the retail price of the truck. Why should it be any different for heifer growers?

What it takes to make a living depends on the goals and resources of the producer. Producers must sit down and calculate an accurate cost of producing heifers.

Producer Panel

Sam Leadley, Noblehurst Farms and editor of Calving Ease, a newsletter for calf and heifer

growers in Pavilion, N.Y., was one of several producers on a panel on calf housing at the conference.

Leadley uses tether hutches, a "very, very forgiving housing system," he said, compared to fixed facilities. They are easier to keep clean and keep heifers healthy.

For Jeannie Wormuth, Agway TSPF Heifer Farm in Elba, N.Y., the strong emphasis is on strict biosecurity. They keep everything clean and do not allow traffic flow, even with visitors, onto the farm.

Wormuth said the Agway farm contracts with 23 dairies. The barns are designed for heifer comfort "all the way through," she said, for each age group. They have about 1,500 heifers on site.


Allen Waybright, Mason-Dixon Farms, Gettysburg, helps manage a 2,300-cow dairy herd with 1,800 heifers. In 1998 they raised 1,060 heifer calves and 500 bull calves (which may go as feeder calves at two months of age).

Mason-Dixon, said Waybright,

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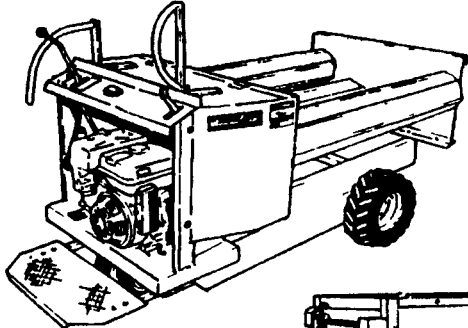


A question and answer panel featured, from left, Jason Karszes, Dan McFarland, and Curt Gooch.

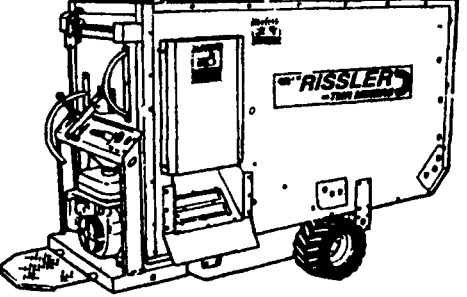


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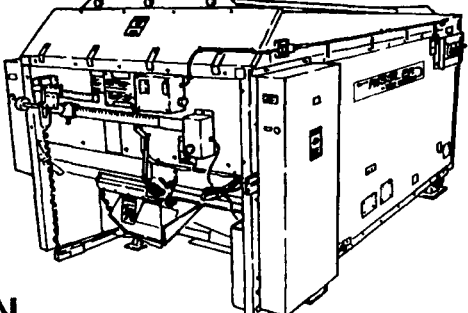
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