

## Freestall And Bedding Management Discussed At Recent Conference

**JAYNE SEBRIGHT**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
**HARRISBURG** (Dauphin Co.) — A cow's production and longevity can be greatly affected by where she chooses to lie down.

Animals will choose the most comfortable place to lie down. If the stall isn't cushioned enough or if it's difficult to get into, a cow will choose the manure over the stall.

Lying in the manure can cause mastitis, leading to high somatic cell counts, higher vet bills, and more cull cow incidents.

If a cow does lie down in a stall that isn't properly designed, she can end up with swollen hocks, bruised shoulders, and other injuries that hurt

her longevity.

Speakers during the afternoon session at the recent Dairy Animal Housing Conference addressed considerations in freestall design and bedding decisions and their impact on cow comfort.

Those speakers included William Bickert, Jack Rodenburg, Richard Stowell, Dan McFarland, K. Larry Smith, Charles Guard III, and Curt Gooch.

Virtually everything in dairy freestall design has changed in the past 20 years, according to the panel.

"Cow comfort has become a major issue driving the evolution of attitude about barn design," said Rodenburg. "Your choice in stall design reflects your management style

and goals. It has also has a major impact on manure handling and design."

The panel encouraged farmers to evaluate cow stress and cow comfort in their herd and make sure that the freestall design encouraged cows to lie down at least 10 to 14 hours a day.

"Lying down on the job promotes cud chewing, increases blood flow, increases growth hormone, decreases cortisol, and causes less feet and leg problems," said Rodenburg.

The panel emphasized that compromises are inevitable in

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## Bailey Reports

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farm price than farmers with lower component levels.

The Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board also sets minimum price levels and over order premiums that are taken into consideration on the milk check.

"The best thing about the new milk pricing system is that components matter a lot," said Bailey. "Farmers with higher butterfat, protein, and other solids will get higher prices."

While Bailey does think the new milk pricing system is working well, he does expect that milk prices will be low for

the next four to five months.

"What can farmers do? They can either get mad or work with the market," said Bailey.

He encourages farmers to budget their income and expenses, forward contract their milk price when the price is good, lock in their feed and other costs, apply for better financing, feed for components and value, and manage production and expenses. These suggestions will help them maintain profitability when the price falls.

Farmers can visit Bailey's web site at [www.aers.psu.eduairyoutlook](http://www.aers.psu.eduairyoutlook).

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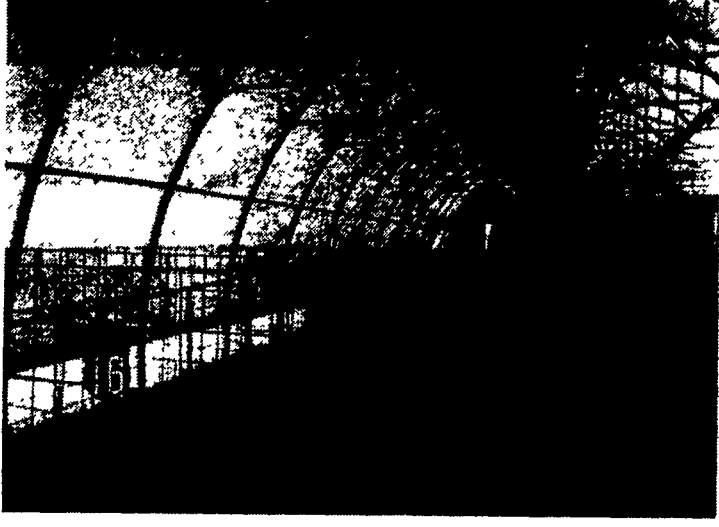
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