

Does High Production

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"When you are looking at production per cow, getting bigger doesn't help you that much, but getting better does," he said.

To maximize your current facilities, Brose recommends filling the barn — "or each cow needs to produce more milk to break even," he said.

"We build a barn, but we don't finance for the cows to fill it up. Those empty stalls are extremely expensive. Do the math on an empty stall. We can afford a \$2,000 heifer rather than having an empty stall," said Brose.

Poor replacement rearing or allowing dry cows to take up valuable space in the barn also hurts the bottom line. "There are cheaper places to house dry cows effectively than in a tie-stall barn."

"Fill slots with the most profitable cows," he said, recommending that producers cull the lower end of cows.

Brose also recommended not overcrowding the herd — which may produce as much milk with a fewer number of animals if they are not crowded.

Switching gears, Brose investigated whether high production is stressful to the animal and going to result in other hidden costs.

"If you expect a cow to give more milk, you have

to give her the extra feed," he said. Even though the feed is additional cost, the math works out, since one pound of dry matter will yield two and a half pounds of milk.

According to Brose, "once maintenance requirements are met, expect each additional pound of dry matter to bring an extra 2.5 pounds of milk."

The extra feed may cost 6-8 cents, however 2.5 pounds milk equals 30 cents in the bank.

"Your seven cents gives you a 30 percent return. You can throw a little feed away at the end of the day (the extra that she does not eat) — it's worth it to get her to eat that extra pound."

Stress — exerting a force on a cow that changes her normal physiology — "requires a cow to respond to that stress and that takes energy," said Brose.

"Does high production cause stress or is high production caused by the removal of stress?" he asked. "Remove the stress and for our efforts we're getting paid in milk production.

"High production is healthy — its normal for these cows. The transition time is what we want to concentrate on and remove stress," he said.

Brose cited a study of a 550-cow herd where the high-producing cows showed better reproductive performance.

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