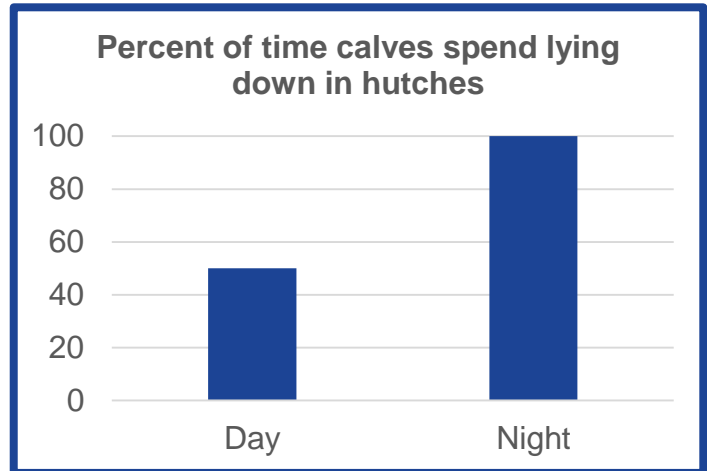




Bedding Comfort

Providing an excellent environment is a key component in successfully raising calves. For calf housing, the environment includes the calf's resting space, feeding and walking surface.

Research shows young calves spend most of their time lying down, making the quality of the resting surface critical. A clean, dry resting surface ensures a hair coat that helps insulates the calf against the cold ground, low air temperatures, and sudden changes in temperature.



Source: P.C. Hoffman, UW-Extension

Knee Test for Comfort & Cleanliness



Photo courtesy of J. Patton

Test 1: Kneel on bedded surface, rocking back and forth to see if pressure is comfortable to knee. Does it feel comfortable?

- ✓ If yes, proceed to Test 2
- ✓ If no, add additional bedding. Repeat Test 1.

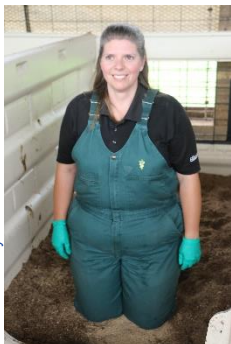


Photo courtesy of J. Patton

Test 2: From a standing position, bend your knees and drop quickly to the bedded surface. Does the impact feel comfortable?

- ✓ If yes, proceed to Test 3.
- ✓ If no, add additional bedding. Repeat Test 2.



Photo courtesy of J. Patton

Test 3: Check your knees. Are they dry or are they wet?

- ✓ If dry, the test is complete. Calf bedding acceptable.
- ✓ If wet, clean pen and/or provide additional dry bedding. Repeat Test 3.



Bedding Comfort

“A calf can stand a good deal of cold weather if it is dry and protected from drafts.”

-Agricultural Experiment Station Circular, July 1931

Photo courtesy of T. Kohlman



Cold Weather Comfort

- A dry place to lie
- Plenty of clean, dry bedding
- Plenty of fresh air
- No cold air drafts
- Minimum frost or condensation during very cold weather

Ideal Bedding



- Provide a good base to:
 - Soak up liquid
 - Provide insulation
 - Allow nesting
- 20-25 pounds of bedding per calf
- 2-3 pounds additional bedding per day

Nesting Scores for Cold Weather

Photo courtesy of S. Mills-Lloyd



Nesting Score 1
Legs are entirely visible when lying down.

Photo courtesy of S. Mills-Lloyd



Nesting Score 2
Legs are partially visible when lying down.

Photo courtesy of A. Bjurstrom



Nesting Score 3
Legs are not visible when laying down.

Originally developed by UW-Extension Oconto County Agriculture Agent Sarah Mills-Lloyd & Fond du Lac County Dairy & Livestock Agent Tina Kohlman for the Nestlé Dairy Farming Institute Curriculum, and adapted for UW-Extension Dairy Team Heifer Blueprints.

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