

December 2010

With the **big changes in temperature, foggy mornings and overall damp / cold feeling pneumonia** in our cattle is a real worry. Make sure the calves are **well vaccinated**, make sure they have **good access to fresh air** either through good **ventilation** or by allowing them to **run out into a clean yard**. Make sure they are not getting too **damp** and are **littered on a good thick and well draining bed**. Most importantly make sure they are not getting too cold.

With only a few die hard cattle being out there a few thoughts on **maximising dry matter intake** into your cattle. It is all very well feeding the diet that the nutritionalist has drawn up, but we need to encourage them to eat. This not only applies to dairy cattle but also to beef and sheep. There is not enough money in farming to simply waste feed so **a few practical changes** can help increase your cows appetite.

1. Think about your **barrier design**: Reduce the amount of metal in front of them. The ideal is one bar straight across the feed barrier.
 - ❖ Make sure the cows are not rubbing their necks against them, if they are then push the bar out more. A ratchet strap is even better but the naughty cows often push through this and walk into the trough. Electric wire above the trough is a no no. It puts cows off eating as much.
2. What is the **floor of the trough / passage like**? Cows like to lick the floor clean and so the smoother the floor the better.
3. **Clean the troughs out before putting fresh food on top**. If not the food soon warms up and spoils.
4. **Push the food up as often as possible**. Cows are inquisitive animals they will come and see what you are doing and eat more at the same time.
5. **Fresh water is very important**. Last year there was lots of starling poo in the water and many of you reported a dip in yield and appetite. Keep the water fresh by regularly cleaning out or by putting fish in!
6. **Clamp management is very important**. Don't turn too much of the clamp sheet back at one go.
 - ❖ Use a shear grab to cut the clamp rather than pulling out the silage.
7. **Don't feed mouldy silage**, as this heats up, tastes horrid and will lead to abortions etc.
8. **Keep on top of your lameness**. A lame cow spends more time lying down and can't be bothered to walk to the barrier, she will also ruminate less.
9. **Keep your cubicles / sheds comfortable**. If the cows is able to lie happily down, she will ruminate more and so have a far better appetite.
10. **Regularly condition score your cows**, Fat cows cost money, they eat the other cows food, they don't work as well for you, they don't pay as well on the fat.
11. **Make sure the diet has enough fibre in**, pick the diet up and squeeze it. If it prickles excellent if not then it is not good enough. Make sure the chop length is not too short at less than 4 cm or too long as they will sort.
 - ❖ We would like to wish everyone a **very happy Christmas**, hopefully we won't be seeing too many of you on the actual day, but if we do get the mince pies warming!!!!
 - ❖ Over the holiday period please can you order drugs before 10 am as we can't guarantee a time after.
 - ❖ All the best and thank you for keeping on supporting us.

Dairy cell check:

Average S.C.C	143	Average protein	3.4	Average % of cows with a SCC above 300 in different stages of lactation	
Average milk yield	8.5	Ave conception rate	36	0-99 days	9
Average milk/cow /yr of life	4.1			100 - 199 days	6
				200 + days	12