



West Central News

by Dr. Jesse Goff
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Earlier this month, West Central had the good fortune to sponsor two timely talks by excellent speakers at the World Dairy Expo educational seminars in Madison, Wisconsin.

Dr. Wendy Powers, Michigan State University, spoke about the impact new regulatory programs conducted by state and federal agencies will have on all confined animal operations. Dr. Powers outlined the processes regulatory agencies are utilizing to establish limits for nutrient escape from farms – including nitrogen and phosphorus – as well as limits for odor and particulate matter.

State standards cannot be less than Federal standards. Some states, such as California, are imposing standards that are more stringent than Federal standards. Dr. Power's research is attempting to delineate scientifically based standards for the industry to follow.

Dr. Marina von Keyserlingk, University of British Columbia, presented a summary of work she and her colleagues are doing on cow comfort and how that affects feed and water intake. They have demonstrated that when feeding time (time spent at the bunk actively taking in feed) of the pre-fresh cow falls below 75 minutes a day, the cow is at a greatly increased risk of developing metritis. As nutritionists, we spend a great deal of time adjusting and balancing nutrients in our pre-fresh diets. Dr. von Keyserlingk's work demonstrates that overcrowding in the pre-fresh

pen can have devastating effects on feeding behavior. Optimal dry matter intake will require much more space than the industry's typical 22-inch headlocks provide dry cows. Every close-up and fresh cow should have a place to lie down and rest. Wet free stalls, low neck rails, and headlock design can all have dramatic effects on feed intake.

SoyChlor can bring anions and absorbable magnesium to the diet in a palatable form to reduce hypocalcemia. SoyPLUS can also improve lysine balance and metabolizable protein balance economically. However, the best designed diet does not work if the cow does not eat it. We all know the answer to metabolic disease issues in dairy cows... a cow that is eating a good diet immediately before and after freshening does not get sick. In my opinion, overcrowding is the single biggest cause of reduced intake and metabolic disease in close-up cows. It is past time for the industry to ask "Does overstocking cows really make us that much money?"

Suggested readings:

Urton G, von Keyserlingk MA, Weary DM. Feeding behavior identifies dairy cows at risk for metritis. *J Dairy Sci.* 2005 Aug;88(8):2843-9.

Powers WJ. Keeping science in environmental regulations: the role of the animal scientist.

J Dairy Sci. 2003 Apr;86(4):1045-51.

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