



VPP Beef Niche Market Cow earns a premium - BCS #3

DQC
Dairy Quality Center
a division of Agri-Education, Inc.

BEEF TRIM



Unworthy of selling into the VPP Beef Niche Market - BCS #1

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Protecting Your Income Potential!

Southwest Region

Spring has sprung and that means hot weather is just around the corner. Now is a good time to double check your cow comfort protocols.

Your responsibility includes your cows' comfort as well as your employees' well being. Increased air circulation, sprinklers and feed ration content and delivery times are a few concerns. Remind employees that as the temperatures increase their tempers don't - they need to be patient with the cows as they are working hard too.

Heat stress is based on temperature & humidity indexes. You can 'Google' a chart to find the details. For example, temperatures of 80° - 90° F with humidity of 50 - 90% is hot for cattle. Heat stress means lost money from reduced milk production, reduced reproductive success, reduced feed intake, increased lameness as cows stand to cool off instead of lying down to ruminate. What's on your checklist in preparation for hot temperatures?

Circulation Who is responsible to make sure the fans are all cleaned off and running? Do fan angles need to be adjusted for optimum air movement? What is the spacing of the fans? (24-30 feet spacing for a 36 inch fan or 20 feet for 48 inch fans). Are fans placed to benefit from prevailing winds? Is the airflow close to the cow height? Are roof vents opened?

Shade Who is the person responsible to oversee the shading options? Do all of your cows have access to shade? (25- 50 square feet per cow) Are cows able to get out of direct sunlight during peak hours? Are shades, nets, or sun screens securely attached so they are in place when needed? Are shades placed north and south? Is the herd density reduced to allow air flow? What system is in place to draw out hot air from the parlors and holding pens?

Water Does your dairy provide ample water for the inside as well as the outside of the cows? A cows' need for water can increase by 50% when the temperatures increase. Who is responsible for checking, cleaning and maintaining the waterers? How many times during the day are the waterers checked to ensure optimum efficiency? Are waterers available when cows leave the milking parlor? Do you have ample space for cows to drink? (2 feet of tank perimeter for every 15-20 cows; two feet of linear trough space per cow in return alleys; 1 water station for every 20 cows).

What about your sprinklers - are the hoses and nozzles all in working order? Who is responsible to make sure they are working and not leaking? Are sprinklers in operation when temperatures are greater than 70° F? Is the line pressure 15-20 psi? Are nozzles spaced every 6-8 feet? What is the mounting height of the nozzles? (5 - 6 feet above the floor)

Feed Maintaining nutrient intake during high temperatures keeps the milk flowing. Feedbunk management is key especially when increasing the number of times fed per day. Feeding less at one time and offering the bulk of their meals during the coolest times of the day/evenings and early mornings are good solutions. (Have the person responsible for the sprinklers check to make sure water is not running into the feed bunks.) Reduced feed in the bunk cuts down on feed loss from spoilage and flies. Feeding minerals and nutrients before the heat settles-in can reduce lameness and associated foot issues. Cows will consume less dry matter, perhaps adding a buffer or feeding higher quality forage will help. Check with the nutritionist to ease into ration changes.

People Don't forget your employees! Provide clean, cool water and a place for employees to rest and regain their energy. Training should include observing cattle for symptoms of overheating, who to contact and what steps to take.

Set up a pre-emptive meeting with both your veterinarian and nutritionist to ensure you have a valid plan of action to prevent casualties.

The DQ Center's Verified Premium Plus program qualifies you to earn cash premiums when marketing high quality cull cows to Caviness Beef Packers. Be sure your cows arrive at the plant in good condition. Do you have a checklist when transporting cows? (1) weather/temperature concerns; (2) ample water prior to loading; (3) Uphold state transportation rules; (4) earn premiums for high quality cows! Have a great summer!

