

Keeping Cows Comfortable

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As farmers one of our top priorities is keeping our cows comfortable because comfortable cows are healthy cows and healthy cows are productive cows. Comfortable for a dairy cow means different things at different times of the year. One of the many advantages to keeping our cows in the barn is controlling the temperature that they live in. While we don't heat our barn, the cows are able to stay out of the winter elements including the snow and wind. And if you look closely at cows during the winter, they actually have what we call a winter coat where they have a shaggier look to them to keep them a bit warmer during the cold winter months.

When the summer heat arrives, we provide fans and misters that cool the herd down. Some farms let their cows or heifers out to pasture, but surprisingly enough, cows typically prefer to be in the barn, out of the shade and in the temperature controlled environment. Clean, fresh water is always available to the herd inside a barn and cows are pretty lucky to have an endless buffet of perfectly rationed food available to them at all times as well. This provides the energy they need to get through the cold winter months or the heat of the summer.

So how do we know cows are comfortable? They tell us. Okay, so they can't talk to us and tell us when they aren't feeling well like our kids do, but they do speak to us in other ways. We utilize technology to help determine the health and wellness of our herd. Cows typically wear devices similar to pedometers that measure a variety of things including the number of steps she takes, the amount of milk she produces and even how much food she's eating and if she's chewing her cud. By reviewing this data we're able to see if something is different or "off" for each of the cows in our herd. More steps could mean a cow is in heat, while less steps may mean she's not feeling well and needs some extra attention. Not eating or chewing her cud is another indicator that something isn't quite right and it's time to check her out and see what's happening. When milk production decreases, it also sends a red flag that a cow might not be feeling well so we're able to step in right away and get her back to feeling healthy and comfortable.

When our cows are comfortable, they are producing milk and providing a high-quality product to your table and mine. We take care of our cows because they take care of us. For more information about keeping cows comfortable, check out our new video located here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGT4cyGTbV4>