

# A comfortable cow bed

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**Your cow's bedding material and how you manage it, is very important if you want your cows to produce quality milk. A quality environment will ensure quality milk.**

Clean, dry, well-bedded stalls will maintain cow cleanliness. It will cause less injury to the cow's teats. Clean and dry bedding will ensure that the teats make contact with a clean area every time a cow lies down. In this way it can also prevent and minimise bacterial growth and may even prevent the transfer of mastitis-causing bacteria to the teat skin.

A comfortable stall bed will help your cows to rest well. We all know that a cow rests about 11 to 12 hours per day, so their resting time HAS to be comfortable for them to produce milk when it is milking time.

Here are some tips to supply your cows with comfortable bedding, that will minimise bacterial growth and keep your cows productive.

## **Comfort**

Provide a dry, soft resting place in which the cows can lie down. A good rubber mat that is specially designed for this purpose, is recommended. It may seem expensive at first, but it is not expensive to maintain.

## **Moisture content**

Moisture, especially with organic bedding such as straw, wood shavings and sawdust, makes bacteria grow faster and reduces the material life. If you have to use these materials, make sure that it is DRY.

## **Cleanliness**

Choose bedding that will not injure or irritate the skin of the teats or hocks (around the ankles).

## **Particle size**

Particle size refers to how fine or coarse the material is that you are using for bedding. For example, wood shavings are coarse, while sawdust is finer. Materials of very small size such as fine sawdust, will stick to the skin and teat ends. This means that the skin and teats will be more exposed to bacteria. Cleaning the teats in the parlour, will also take up extra time.

## **Manage your cow's bedding**

Farmers often think that they should cut on labour and bedding costs. However, this is not a good idea as your cows' hygiene, comfort and health will be affected by poor bedding. You can improve your bedding management by making sure of four things:

- Use proper bedding material that is dry and comfortable
- Clean the bedding area regularly, especially the bedding material at the back of the stall. This is the area that is in contact with the teats and can be most contaminated with mastitis bacteria

- Make sure that your stall is not overcrowded. If there are too many cows and the traffic in and out of the stalls is too much, then the bedding will become contaminated with manure, moisture and bacteria more quickly
- Scrape the manure alleys often, as this will lower the level of new mastitis infections.

### How to evaluate your bedding management

You can evaluate your own management of your cows' bedding by drawing up a list of questions and checking whether you complete these important tasks every week.

1. Do you clean bed stalls more than once a week? Increasing how often you clean and rake the bedding material in stalls from once per week to three times per week, can improve cow health and will reduce bedding waste.
2. Is wet, contaminated bedding scraped from the back of stalls and replaced with dry bedding at least twice a day?
3. Are manure alleys scraped frequently? These alleys must be scraped three times a day to minimise the amount of stall contamination.
4. If you use manure alley scrapers, or any other ways of mechanical scraping like a small tractor, are they on the correct settings and are they maintained well? Are the alleyways clean after a scraper passed? If you bolt hard rubber strips to the bottom of the alley scrapers, this can enhance their cleaning action. If hard metal blades are used for scraping, you can end up with a surface that is too smooth and too slippery.

### Locomotion problems

Locomotion problems are problems that occur when cows have trouble standing, walking or moving. Locomotion means movement. A locomotion score will help you to see whether your bedding surface and other surfaces where cows move, support your cows. They must be able to stand and move comfortably in those areas.

**You can do a locomotion score for every cow in the following way:**

1. **Normal** – The cow stands and moves normally
2. **Mildly lame** – The cow stands level, but has an arched back when walking
3. **Moderately lame** – The cow has an arched back when standing and walking.  
Her gait (walking motion) is affected
4. **Lame** – An arched back is always present. The cow prefers to put her weight on at least one specific limb. For example, she may support herself more with the right leg, because the left one is sore.

Cows scoring a 3 or 4, should be considered lame and it would be wise to take another look at their bedding surface. Also check that the alleyways are not too slippery. All surfaces have to be safe so that cows are not injured.

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# Cow bedding

Koeibeddegoed / Utshani obendlalelwa izinkomo /  
Umondlalo wenkomo / Moalo wa kgomo

- Cows need a soft and dry resting place to lie down. Clean, dry, well-bedded stalls will keep cows clean and cause less injury to the cow's teats.
- Koeie het 'n sagte, droë rusplek nodig om in te lê. Skoon, droë stalle met genoeg beddegoed sal koeie skoon hou en help om speenbeserings te verminder.
- Izinkomo zidinga indawo enomfonomfo neyomile yokuquba. Izitebele ezihlanzekile ezomile futhi ezendlalelwe kahle zizogcina izinkomo zihlanzekile futhi zehlise ukulimala kwemibele yezinkomo.
- linkomo zifuna indawo ethambileyo neyomileyo yokuphumla ukuze zilale phantsi. Izitali ezicocekileyo, ezomileyo, ezondlelwe kakuhle ziyakuzigcina zicocekile iinkomo kwaye zibange ukwenzakala okuncinane kwimibele yeenkomo.
- Dikgomo di hloka sebaka se bonojana mme hape se ommeng sa ho phomola bakeng sa ho paqama. Masaka a hlwekileng, a ommeng, a adilweng hantle a tla boloka dikgomo di hlwekile mme hona ho tla fokotsa ho tswa kotsi matsweleng a kgomo.



## Bedding materials

Rubber mat, straw, wood shavings and sawdust.

## Materiaal vir beddegoed

Rubbermat, strooi, houtskaafsels en saagsels.

## Izinto ongazendlala

Umata owakhiwe ngenjoloba, ilala, amaxolo, nemvuthu yesaha.

## Izinto zokwenza umondlalo

Imethi yerabha, udiza, imvuthuluka yemithi nembuphu yesarha.

## Disebediswa tsa moalo

Moseme wa raba, lehlaka, mapatso a patsi le phofo ya patsi e sakgilweng.



**Keep your cow's bedding area clean and dry**

- Replace wet and dirty bedding every day.
- Scrape the manure alleys every day.
- Do not overcrowd.



**Hou jou koei se slaapplek skoon en droog**

- Vervang elke dag vuil en nat beddegoed.
- Skraap die misgange elke dag.
- Moet nie te veel koeie in een stal aanhou nie.



**Gcina indawo yokuquba kwezinkomo ihlanzekile futhi yomile.**

- Shintsha isendlalo esimanzi nesingcolile zonke izinsuku.
- Gugula imihubhe yomquba zonke izinsuku.
- Ungawaminyanisi amankonyane.

**Gicna indawo yomondlalo wenkomo yakho icocekile kwaye yomile**

- Tshintsha umondlalo omanzi nongcolileyo yonke imihla.
- Khuhla iindlela ezixineneyo zomquba yonke imihla.
- Ungagcwalisi ngokugqithisileyo.



**Boloka sebaka sa moalo wa kgomo ya hao se hlwekile hape se omme**

- Fetola moalo o metsi le ho silafala letsatsi le letsatsi.
- Fala ditselanyana tsa manyolo letsatsi le letsatsi.
- O se ke wa pakella.

■ If the alleyways are too smooth and slippery, your cows can be injured and become lame. A lame cow has trouble standing, walking or moving.

■ Indien die gange te glad en glibberig is, kan jou koeie beseer word en verlam raak. 'n Lam koei sukkel om te staan, loop of beweeg.

■ Uma imihubhe igudulekile futhi isheleleka, izinkomo zakho zingalimala futhi zikhubazeke. Inkomo ekhubazekile ingaba nezinkinga zokuma, ukuhamba nokunyakaza.

■ Ukuba ngaba iindlela ezixineneyo zigude kakhulu kwaye zimtyibilizi iinkomo zakho zingonzakala zize ziqhwalele. Inkomo eqhwalelayo inengxaki yokuma, ukuhamba okanye ukushukuma.

■ Ha ditselanyana di le boreledi haholo ebile di thella dikgomo tsa hao di ka tswa kotsi mme di qhiletse. Kgomo e qhiletsang e ba le bothata ba ho ema, ho tsamaya kapa ho sisinyeha. 