

Animal Care and Comfort

Situation Overview:

As shared by Andy Bollinger

- A. *Can you determine if cow comfort or care was limiting the productivity or profitability of your dairy operation? Yes. If yes, please list animal factor(s) that needed to be improved.* We needed to improve our cows' leg and hoof health. At times, our cows would spend two hours per milking in the holding pen, three milkings per day.
- B. *If you determined that cow comfort or care was a limiting factor, did you make structural and/or management changes to address the deficiencies? Please list structural and/or management changes.* With our new parlor, we've reduced the time cows spend in holding pens. Cows no longer need to jump 18 inches into the parlor, three times a day and we've improved our walkways. There are no longer steep slopes going into the parlor. The changes have had a positive impact, with steady increases in milk production, over time.
- C. *What did you learn that would be of interest to the broader dairy community?* We added 24 free stalls at the end of our walkways. We use deep bedded solids in those 24 stalls. Our cows love those stalls and there are always cows waiting to lie down. As compared to our stalls with mattresses, that are the same width and length, the cows are definitely more comfortable in deep bedded solids. We also have not seen any increase in mastitis with the deep bedded solids group, as compared to the mattress group.
- D. *What is your farm's approach to administration and documentation around the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for animal care?* We have nothing written down, but communicate with employees, as we work during the day. We have yearly employee meetings.

