

Animal Care and Comfort

Situation Overview:

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.*

- Ventilation
- Stall size and comfort
- Heat detection
- Sorting and handling-gating and headlocks
- Close-up housing
- Feed bunk limitations
- Water restrictions
- Floor surface too slick
- Overcrowding

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.*

- 208 cow free stall barn bedded with separated manure solids
- 4- LELY A4 Astronaut robotic milking system
- Sturdy Built gates and stalls
- Keystone precast alley scraper gutters
- Jamesway alley scrapers
- Autovent ventilation
- Routine footbath

C. *What did you learn that would be of interest to the broader dairy community?* Our future investments would be in additional robotics or other technology – software updates or new programs for production or milk quality control. It would be a system that could be easily incorporated into our robotic barn or perhaps at the other facilities.

We've also been excited about using separated manure solids as bedding. We've seen a decrease in foot problems, compared to our other barns' with mattresses. Deep manure solid bedding is demonstrating major cow comfort benefits for us. The manure separator has been a good investment and will provide a quick payback.

D. *What is your farm's approach to administration and documentation around the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for animal care?* We have a SOP handbook for all procedures and policies. This is a tool that we use constantly, with continuous updates.

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E. *Have you enrolled in a formal animal care program? If so, what have you learned that's been beneficial to your operation?* We have been Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) certified. This has been an eye opener for our business, especially with the difference in foot and leg scores between the new barn and the older barns. It's also raised our standards in the training of our employees.

