



More cubicles than cows – standard justification

HF. 8.1 It is recommended that the housing system provides a greater number of cubicles than the number of cows in the group, ensuring that all cows have unrestricted access to a suitable lying area and genuine choice of resting location.

Justification

A substantial body of research demonstrates that providing fewer cubicles than cows increases competition for lying space, reduces lying time, increased standing and aggressive interactions between animals, and can compromise cow welfare. These effects disproportionately affect subordinate cows, which are more likely to be displaced or have their access to preferred lying areas restricted.

EFSA (2023) concluded with high certainty that at least one cubicle per cow is needed to avoid restriction of resting behaviour, and further concluded that cows, particularly subordinate cows, benefit from housing with more cubicles than cows. Additional cubicle capacity provides greater choice of resting location and reduces competition and displacement, recognising that cubicles are not necessarily equally attractive or available to all cows at all times.

Improved cow comfort and opportunities for adequate rest may well deliver commercial benefits. Research has associated adequate lying time and reduced competition with improved health and productive performance, while reducing lameness and other health problems can support milk production, reproductive performance and longevity. Providing sufficient cubicle capacity can therefore contribute to both good welfare and efficient herd performance.

References

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