

Wake up advisors: taking better care of cows is far far simpler than most of you preach

Pro-active advisors can make cows live longer and happier

For: All persons worldwide involved in advising dairy farmers.

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This information has been provided by our colleagues at CowSignals. It has not been subject to Vetstream's peer review process. We hope you find it useful.

INTRODUCTION

Five productive years instead of three, going from 30.000 liter to 50.000 liter lifetime production per cow is possible. Advisors can improve longevity of cows by being a good general management & health advisor and persuader! This is a new, very rewarding role for, for instance, the feed advisor and the dairy vet.

By playing this role, they will have a direct impact on the environment because of fewer young stock rearing and better feed conversion. And they will improve cow and farmer wellbeing!

Over the last decade, I have visited numerous dairies in 50 countries around the world, training people in practice to observe dairy cows and to improve the housing, feeding and management of these animals. With great enthusiasm and with much appreciation by the people who I have trained and given advices.

Recently, a Swedish advisor asked me to write something about my experiences straight from my heart. Which I did. And I would like to share this thought with you too!



Joep Driessen and Jan Hulsen with cow Els

A THOUGHT FROM MY HEART

The cow does a lot for us. She is changing grass into a very nice product: milk, and she can do this very effectively. But what do we do for the cow? I think most of the farmers and advisors work very hard to make the cow happy and to make themselves happy. But is that good enough? Are we doing the things right? Are we doing the right things?

ARE YOU FOCUSING ON THE RIGHT THINGS?

Have you ever asked yourself the following questions: What if cows do not have wounds anymore? What if there are no lame cows anymore? What if there are not 30% cows with a danger triangle in the left flank (empty rumen..)?

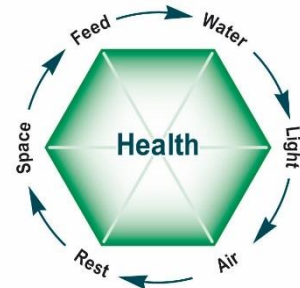
This would create an enormous positive effect on the welfare of both cows and farmers... Plus a big improvement for the environment.



IT IS ABOUT THE BASIC NEEDS

Nothing can beat the common sense of the top 5% farmers in all countries. So I challenge you to focus on the things they consider most important and on the way they do things. I have been doing so for over 15 years now and found out that this is actually very simple: the best farmers focus on keeping things simple and on ensuring that the basic needs of every cow are fulfilled every day.

These basic cow needs can be summarized as: maximum [feed](#), [water](#), [light](#), [air](#), [rest](#) and [space](#). Plus absence of wounds and infections. With this put in place, all your cows will stay happy and healthy. Bring these 6 freedoms of the pasture under your roof.



START TODAY

Here is a list of questions that you can start improving today:

1. What if there is no more fresh air seeking behavior?
2. What if all the cows eat 12 meals a day?
3. What if all cows walk and stand up without pain?
4. What if there is no stress around [calving](#)?
5. What if all heifers start their lactation the first 3 weeks without stress?
6. What if no one would shout to cows and would never hit them?

LET'S CONTRIBUTE TO BETTER CARE FOR COWS

I am convinced that we as advisors can make a far greater contribution to the productivity, health and wellbeing of the cows. And thus to the prosperity of our clients: the farmers. There is a lot of hidden money in every dairy in the world. I see this every day, working on dairy farms all over the world.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO IN EVERY BARN

In my experience, this is the short-list with most important things. The best farmers have this under control, the rest should follow as soon as possible.

1. Give every cow a soft bed (deep loose material like sand, straw, peat, compost etc.).
2. Give every cow head space to swing her head forward while standing up.
3. Give every cow a feeding place (70-75cm), so the whole group can all eat at the same time.
4. Give the cows a [stress free calving line](#): excellent resting and feeding possibilities from 3 weeks before to 3 weeks after calving.
5. Let a -good- hoof trimmer come every month and check all the cows 90-60 days before and 60-90 days after calving.
6. And start walking and talking friendly with your cows and young stock, and build up trust with them.

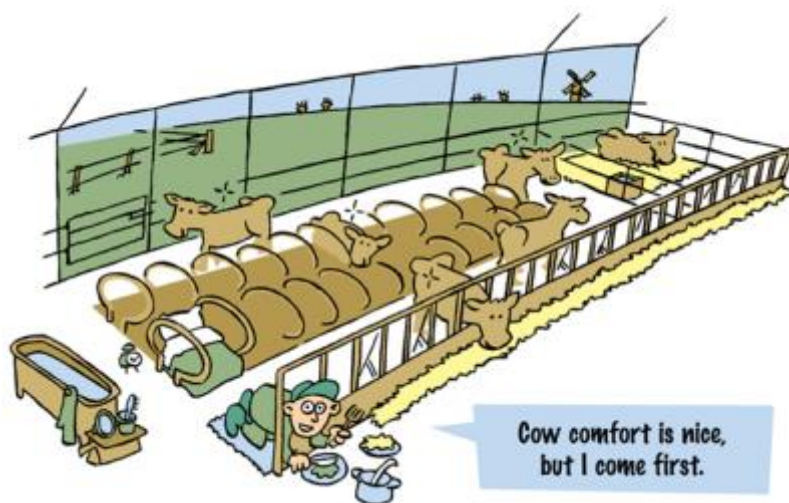
My last message is: take care of your family and friends. Live life with passion. Life is short so enjoy every day.

I wish all advisors and farmers good luck with doing the right things and a big encouraging "moo" to all the cows in the world: we are working on it to make your life better!

Kind regards,

Joep Driessen, DVM,

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One soft bed per cow, 75 cm feeding space per cow and a stress free calving line...