

Dairymen discover newspaper bedding beneficial, cheaper



The cows in this stanchion barn seem to be very content on the newspaper bedding. Many farmers are beginning to use newspaper as an alternative to straw because it is cheaper, dryer and keeps the cows cleaner.

having some mastitis problems and my somatic cell count was around 300,000. The first month after I tested, it dropped to 200,000."

Peters said before the newspaper bedding his somatic cell count was averaging between 150,000 to 250,000. Now he said his herd averages between 90,000 and 190,000.

"The last four months it's averaged lower than what it was before," he said. "The newspaper is the only thing I've changed in that time."

Both men think the reason for the lower somatic cell counts is because the cows stay cleaner and drier.

Fogel said when he used straw for bedding he didn't bed the cows very heavily in the stanchion barn.

"I bed them heavy with the paper, but when they lay down there is virtually no bulk to it," he said. "It seems to stay well underneath the cows."

When it comes to his liquid manure system, Fogel said he couldn't use anything better.

"When it's in the system it dissolves once you move it around," he said. "It works a lot better than straw."

Peters said he finds that the newspaper works better in his manure spreader because it spreads more evenly in the field and he doesn't get that build-up on the spreader's beaters.

Peters said this past summer he noticed the fly population around his farm tapered off.

"I've seen a dramatic decrease in the flies since I've been using the paper," he said.

Both farmers also use manure packs to house heifers on. And they both find the heifers stay drier and cleaner with the newspaper.

Questions of inks and chemicals in the newspaper has caused some discussion, but a study analyzed by Penn State University shows that paper-bedded and straw-bedded cow manure have nearly equal chemical make-up.

The Potter County, Pa. herd studied showed paper bedding consisted of 3.2 percent dry weight basis total nitrogen, 1.4 percent phosphate and 5.1 percent potash. Straw-bedded manure consisted of 4.4 percent nitrogen, 1.6 percent phosphate and 5.1 percent potash.

The results also concluded newspaper-bedded manure proved copper, zinc, lead, chromium, mercury, nickel and cadmium levels were all equal to or lower than straw-bedded levels.

Newspaper: shred it and bed it

By Scott Morey

SALEM — With last year's drought and continued high straw prices, newspaper bedding is becoming a popular alternative.

Jeff Peters, a Crawford County, Pa. dairyman, has been using newspaper bedding on his 60-cow Jersey farm since last summer.

"I'd been toying with the idea for about a year," he said. "But I got into it because I ran out of straw last year. I'll never go back to straw for bedding."

Glenn Fogel of Beaver County, Pa., has been using newspaper on his 70-cow Holstein farm for about three months.

"If I had to buy one or the other, I would buy paper over straw because of my liquid manure system in the stanchion barn," he said.

Even though the two men use two different types of manure systems, (Peters spreads manure daily from his tie-stall barn), both agree that newspaper has been beneficial in their dairy operations.

Peters said there are many advantages of using newspaper for bedding, but the biggest reason is "the cows just do better on it."

"It's cleaner and the cows stay drier," Fogel said. "The cows aren't nearly as dirty on the newspaper."

One advantage that neither farmer counted on was the decline in their somatic cell counts.

"My somatic cell count has really dropped," Fogel said. "I'd been

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