82nd Annual

Ottawa Valley Farm Show 2009

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY

MARCH 17, 18 & 19

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82nd edition

Ottawa Valley Farm Show: largest annual exhibition of its kind east of Toronto

OTTAWA — The 82nd edition of the Ottawa Valley Farm Show will take place at Lansdowne Park March 17 to 19.

The OVFS is the largest annual exhibition of its kind held in Ontario east of Toronto.

The show features 300 commercial exhibitors offering everything from machinery and equipment to computer and financial services. Every year, more than 12,000 visitors pass through the gates during the show's three days.

Sponsored by the Ottawa Valley Seed Growers Association, the event will be open March 17 from 9 am to 5 pm, March 18 from 9 am to 8 pm, and March 19 from 9 am to 4 pm.

Displays will be set up in the Coliseum, Aberdeen Pavilion, and the Civic Centre (including the arena, exhibit halls, and concourse). In addition, there will be machinery on display outdoors.

Among features of the show is a cattle breed information display located on the concourse.

The annual seed competition and display will be held in the seed growers' booth on the concourse. The annual Prestigious Pedigreed Seed Sale will take place March 19 at noon, with proceeds going to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The new Country Home Centre (crafts and product demonstrations) will also be set up on the concourse. The Women's Institute Tea Room in the exhibit halls will offer tea and homemade cookies with a donation.

The Ottawa Valley Farm Show is Ontario's longest running agricultural trade show — it holds the record of the longest continuous event organized by farmers for farmers, other rural residents, and business people.

This year, more than 320 exhibitors will show off the latest innovations in goods and services affecting the agriculture industry.

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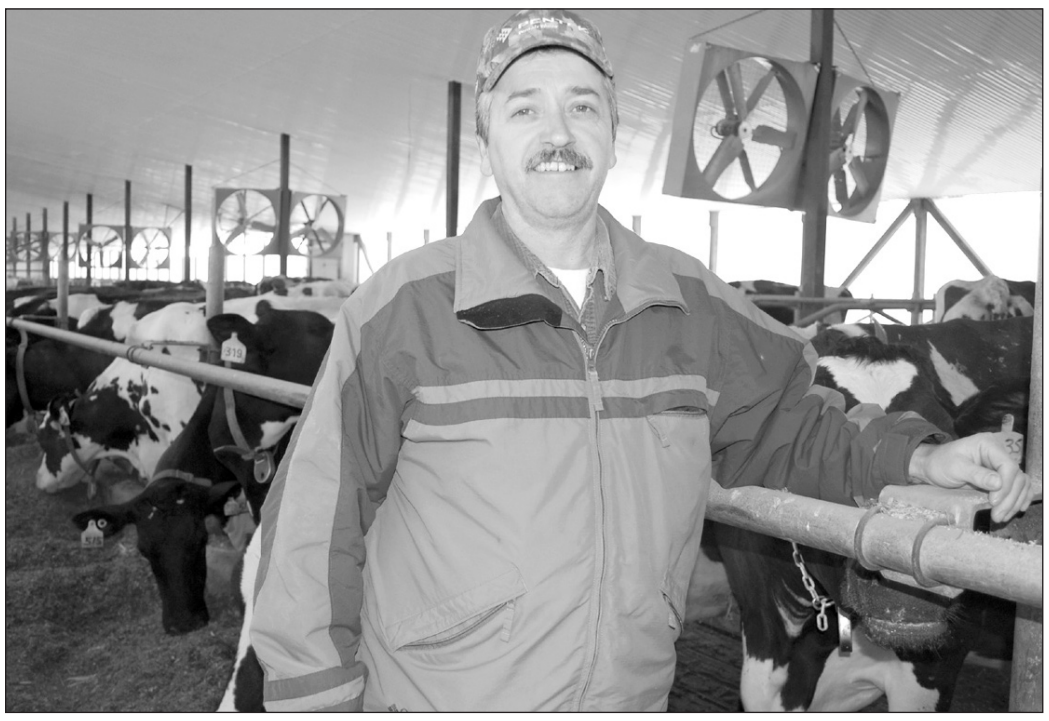



These two Thurler Farm cows might look a bit lazy, but don't be fooled — they're actually hard at work producing milk. Lying on waterbeds from Murphy's Sales & Service, these cows are relaxed and have their legs and udder to the side. Butch Whitteker, pictured at Thurler Farms in South Mountain, is the local retailer for cow waterbeds. *Press Photos — Smith-Millar*

Cows kick up their hooves in comfort with new technology

BRINSTON — Waterbeds were all the rage 30 years ago, but have since gone out of style. But that's certainly not the case when it comes to dairy farms in North America — some producers are replacing traditional rubber mats and installing waterbeds to ensure cow comfort.

According to South Mountain farmer Nick Thurler, the waterbeds are making his cows more comfortable — and maybe even more productive. After the 1998 ice storm destroyed his barn, Thurler decided to revamp and expand his farm. He started from scratch, installing rubber-filled pasture mats in 300 stalls. During another expansion in 2006, he installed 175 waterbeds.

Waterbeds a moooving experience

"The cows are more comfortable," said Thurler.

Each bed contains only 13 gallons of water, so when a cow steps on the mat, she senses the concrete below and feels steady and secure. When it's time to lie down, the water displaces just enough so there's less pressure on her knees, hocks, and udder.

Farmers typically want their cows to spend more time lying down, as that's when they produce more milk, Thurler explained.

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Waterbeds: a moooving experience

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"It seems that they spend a little more time laying down," he said about the cows using the waterbeds.

A 2007 Colorado State University study found the waterbed base may have a positive impact on a cow's health — and a farmer's bottom line. The study's authors surveyed U.S. farms using one of three stall bases: rubber-filled mattresses, sand, or waterbeds. The study took a somatic cell count (somatic cells in higher numbers are a problem — they can cause mastitis, which is an inflammatory problem of the mammary gland). The average cell count was lowest in cows using waterbeds and highest in cows using rubber-filled mattresses.

Meanwhile, producers were the most satisfied with using waterbeds when it came to bedding costs and use, manure management, labour, and how long the base lasts.

The study hasn't been peer-reviewed, and its authors said more research needs to be done to find out which stall base is really the best. Still, the preliminary data suggests there's a relationship between waterbeds and improved cow health.

> Preliminary data suggests there's a relationship between waterbeds and improved cow health

Butch Whitteker is the local retailer for Advanced Comfort Technology, the company that manufactures cow waterbeds. His business, Murphy's Sales and Service in Brinston, specializes in water conditioning.

"Cow waterbeds will not pocket or form low points where water and urine can pool and create mastitis problems," said Whitteker. "They will therefore keep their shape for years to come."

Whitteker added that the waterbeds don't require much maintenance, and he's one to know — Murphy's Sales and Service has customers from Toronto to western Quebec. He's responsible for driving out to any customers' farm to fix waterbed problems. Whitteker said only one bed has leaked, and the problem actually took place at Thurler Farms. A piece of machinery accidentally punctured the waterbed, but Whitteker was able to solve the problem by applying a patch.

The dual-chamber cow waterbed has a 10-year warranty in free-stall barns and a life expectancy of 15 to 20 years.

"I have looked at waterbeds that are now 10 years old, and they look the same as a new one today," said Whitteker.

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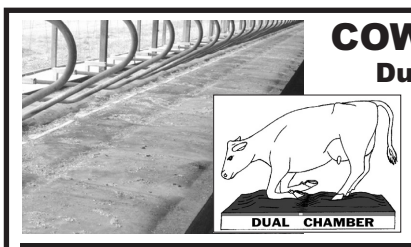

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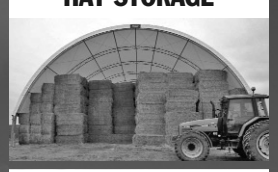
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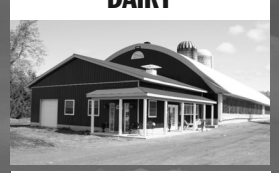
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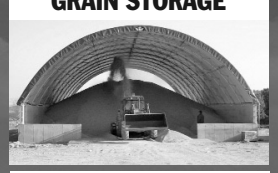
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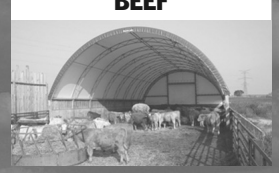
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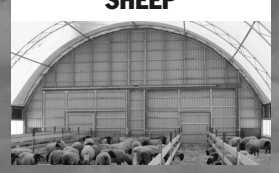
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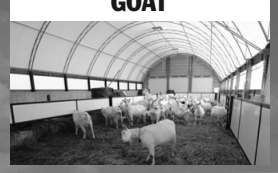
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Researcher suggests alternative ways to rear calves

Mother knows best, says assistant professor

by Amanda Smith-Millar
Press staff

KEMPTVILLE — If farmers want to improve their calf-rearing techniques, they should look to the top experts in the barn: cows.

Female cattle can teach the agriculture industry a thing or two about feeding calves, according to Trevor DeVries. The assistant professor shared the findings of recent research during Dairy Day at the University of Guelph Kemptville Campus on Fri., Feb. 13.

Calves are usually separated from their mothers shortly after birth and are typically provided milk from a bucket.

Cows, said DeVries, tend to nurse calves five to 10 times per day. By comparison, farmers usually feed calves twice per day.

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Holy cow

Trevor DeVries, an assistant professor at the University of Guelph Kemptville Campus, spoke about calf feeding and rearing during Dairy Day on Fri., Feb. 13.
Press Photos — Smith-Millar



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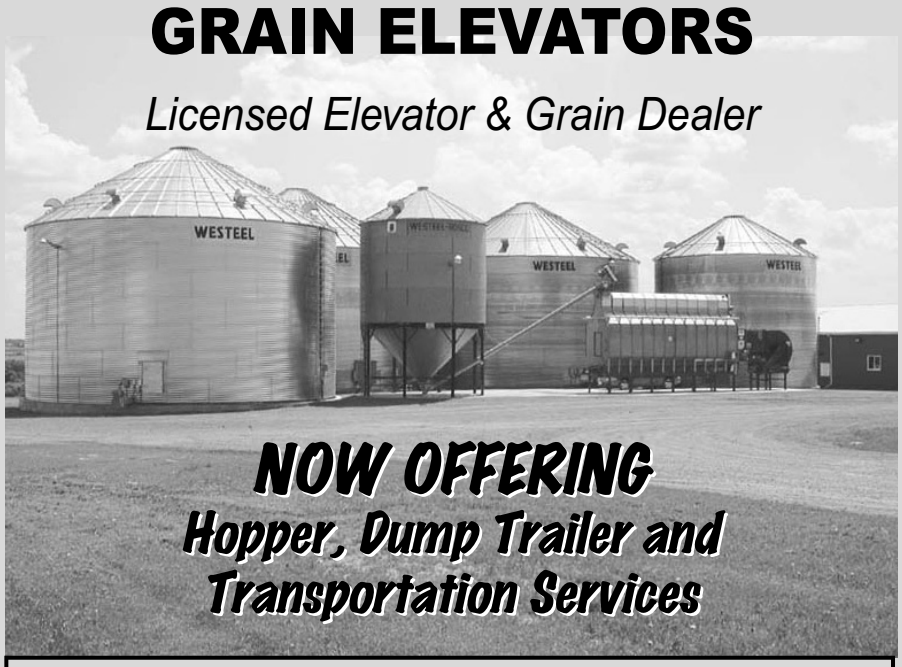

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Calves

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A 2002 University of British Columbia study found that providing more milk allows the calves to grow faster. Intensified early nutrition, said DeVries, tends to result in greater early growth of calves.

On top of that, a 2005 study also suggested calves that are fed less milk tend to have a greater chance of getting sick. So ideally, said DeVries, you should give calves as much to drink as they want, whenever they want.

But milk that's left out all day, DeVries pointed out, can go bad and increase the risk of disease. To solve this, he suggested providing the calves with pasteurized milk, limiting the amount of time calves have to drink their meal, and acidifying the milk using formic acid.

However, DeVries pointed out that the University of Guelph Kemptville Campus is "still in the early stages" of researching acidified milk.

Meanwhile, a 2001 study found that during each feeding, calves spent 44 seconds on average drinking milk, and six minutes sucking on the empty bucket.

DeVries said this finding is very important. It suggests calves instinctively want something on which to suck. He also said some people are experimenting with feeding calves from an artificial teat.

"It's a much more natural behaviour for the calves," noted DeVries. He said having multiple teats available will reduce competition among the calves. Plus, it allows the calves to be reared in group pens.

"Calf health is better — or improved — in smaller groups," said DeVries.

Typically, said DeVries, farmers worry about leaving calves in group pens because they could start sucking on each other, which can result in injuries. Artificial teats, said DeVries, should act like a soother for the calves.

"Without that need to express, they won't be doing much cross-sucking," said DeVries.

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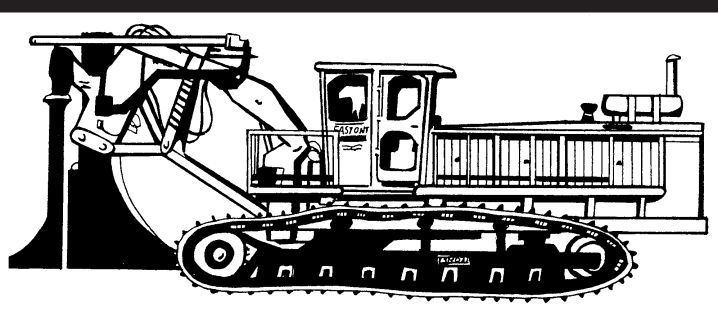
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Kemptville Dairy Day



Above: *Lezlee Byers-Smith of Byers Farm Equipment said she has attended Dairy Day for quite some time. "It's good exposure," she said.*
Right: *TD Bank agriculture account managers Kelly Fawcett-Mathers (left) and Jamison Hymus were ready to answer farm-specific questions from their clients at Dairy Day.*





Above: *Keith Randy Lavier (left) and Murray Matheson manned the Farmer's Sealed Storage Inc. booth. Lavier said Dairy Day gives him the chance to talk with potential clients and existing customers before life gets busy for farmers in the spring and summer months. "Later on in the year, they're on the land," he said. "Once the weather breaks, they're busy."*
Right: *Want a pen? Nine-year-old Gabrielle Venne supervised the Diamond V Yeast Culture booth while her dad listened to an afternoon lecture next door.*
Press Photos — Smith-Millar

Local farm industry workers gathered at the University of Guelph Kemptville Campus for the annual Dairy Day event, held on Fri., Feb. 13. Some of them plan to attend the 2009 Ottawa Valley Farm Show, running March 17 to 19 in Ottawa.



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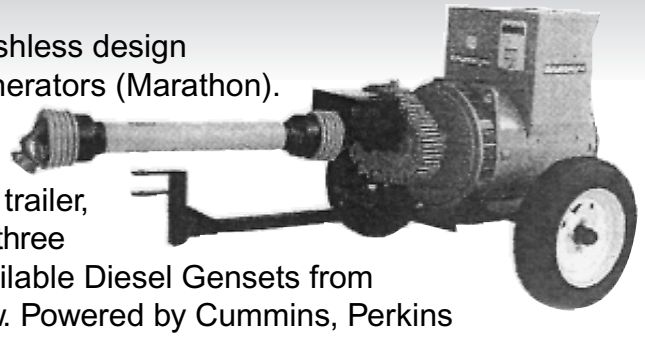

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Dinner and draw

Farmers returned home with full stomachs and, in some cases, prizes after a supper and information session at Weagant Farm Supplies in Winchester on Wed., Feb. 25. About 90 customers and staff had a roast-beef dinner before watching a presentation about New Holland tractors. Later that evening, a draw took place. James Harbers (left) and Andreas Jampen (second from left) took home model tractors, while Willy Rasa (centre) won a jacket. Doug MacGregor (second from right) won an overnight package for two to the Hilton Hotel at the Casino de Lac Leamy in Gatineau, Que. Rita Velthuis (right) was the big winner of the night, capturing a weekend getaway for two to Toronto. The package included two nights at the Delta Chelsea Hotel, train tickets, and a live entertainment show.
Press Photo — Smith-Millar

Sample soil for quick diagnosis

KEMPTVILLE — Soil sampling is a quick and easy way for producers to get answers and solutions for crop problems.

Soil specialist Keith Reid and crop advisor Paul Sullivan teamed up to lead the soil-testing workshop at the Eastern Ontario Crop Conference on Thurs., Feb. 19 at the University of Guelph Kemptville Campus.

There are three reasons to sample soil: to see what the nutrient level in the soil is and determine a fertilizer program; to see if lime needs to be added; and to monitor what's happening with the nutrient levels in the soil as a way of tracking the soil.

It's also a way to diagnose problems should there be variance in growth.

To perform a proper soil sample, one needs to take a six-inch core section every one to two acres; mix the samples in a buckets; and take a second subsample to send to the lab.

"Sample when it's easy to travel through the field," noted Sullivan.

When sampling, producers should move surface residue to the side so that the topsoil organic matter doesn't influence the soil sample reading, and realize that manure will elevate levels in the reading.

If a producer lists the crops they intend to grow in the field for which they submit a sample, they will also receive a crop-rating list comparing the quality of the soil to the growability of the crops.

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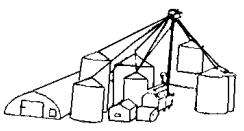

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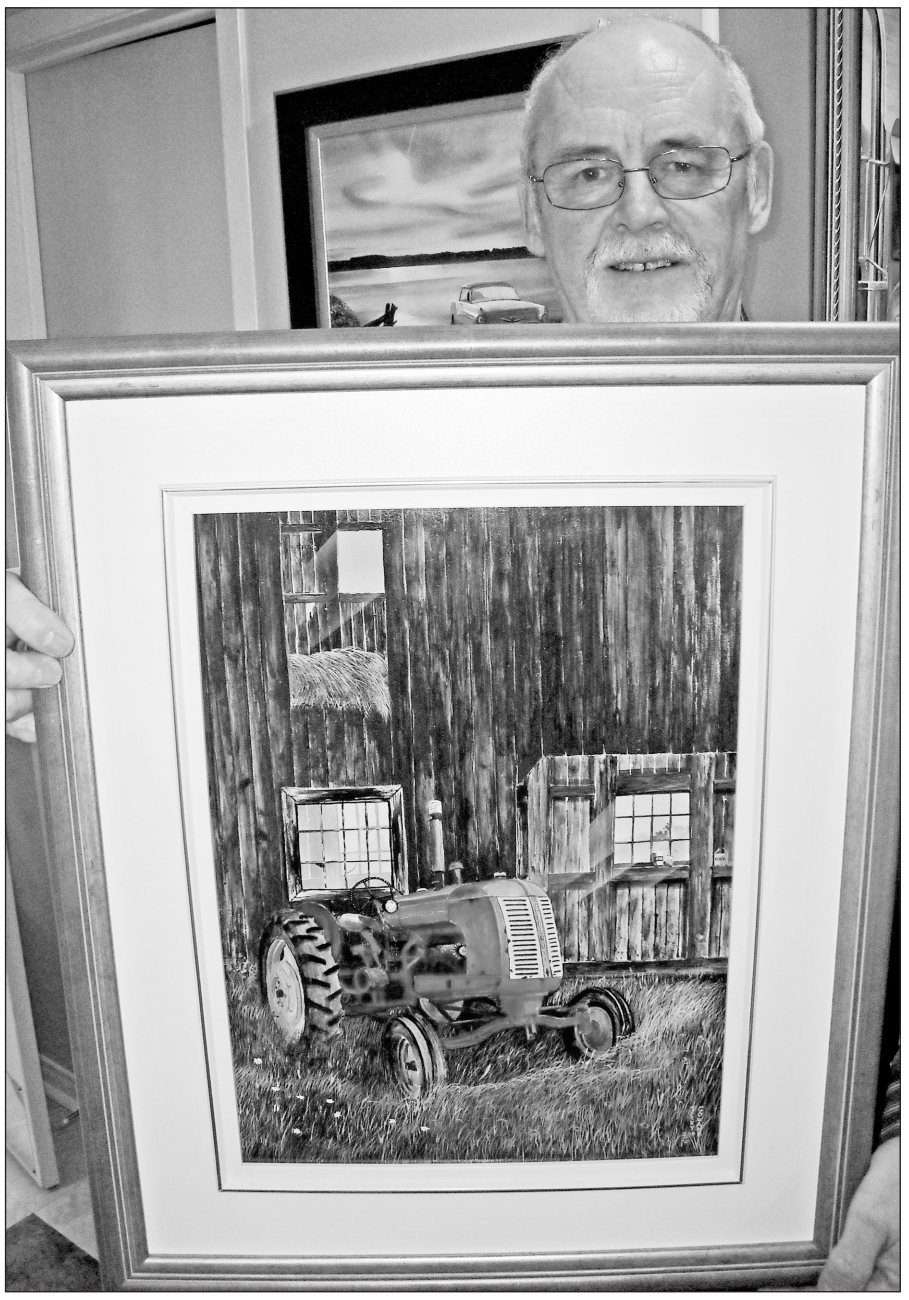

Ottawa artist Terry Cowan to be featured at the farm show

OTTAWA — He's been a Canadian Armed Forces peacekeeper in Cyprus and an OC Transpo diesel mechanic, but Ottawa artist Terry Cowan has a gentler side.

"I drew and coloured pictures from early childhood as most children do ... I just never grew out of it," said the artist, who will be featured at this year's Ottawa Valley Farm Show.

While stationed in Cyprus, Cowan made posters that were hung on armoured cars. Working at OC Transpo, he designed a company flag as well as logos and pins. In the evening, he painted birds and other wildlife, developing a keen interest in rural subject matter.

Auction of painting to raise funds for CHEO

One of Cowan's paintings will be auctioned off at the annual Prestigious Pedigreed Seed Sale March 19 at noon. Net proceeds will be directed to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

The varnished acrylic painting on board and framed in wood depicts an antique tractor resting on a mattress of hay in an old barn.

Cowan explained the painting is a composite — he created the backdrop for an old Cockshutt he spotted at the Carp Fair.

A full-time artist for the past three years, the Nepean Fine Art League member has participated in exhibitions across Ontario for more than 20 years.

"My interest lies in texture, colours, and shapes more than subject, whether I'm painting a chickadee or a steam train," he said.

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Focus on nutrition

by Amanda Smith-Millar
Press staff

KEMPTVILLE — Farmers need to focus on nutrition to get maximum use out of the biggest, and most important, of a cow's four stomachs: the rumen.

That was the key message of Mary Beth de Ondarza, an American dairy nutritionist and guest speaker at Kemptville Dairy Day on Fri., Feb. 13.

According to de Ondarza, farmers shouldn't just watch what's going in the front end of a cow — what's coming out the back end is equally important.

> To avoid subclinical acidosis, farmers should make sure their cows are eating frequently during the day.

"I'm a huge manure watcher," said de Ondarza. "That's how I can figure out what's going on inside these cows."

Inconsistent manure that's pasty, loose and bubbly, or stiff often means the cows are either getting too much starch or not enough fibre. It could even mean the cow has subclinical acidosis, a serious metabolic disorder.

To avoid subclinical acidosis, farmers should make sure their cows are eating frequently during the day. According to de Ondarza, research indicates that high-producing cows eat nine to 19 meals per day. "Slug feeding" — or feeding cows fewer and larger meals — should be avoided.

Overcrowding, de Ondarza said, is another issue. Cows that have to compete with one another for food often don't get the nutrition they need. Demure cows that get pushed around by their penmates are more likely to eat fewer and larger meals, promoting subclinical acidosis.

As a dietician, de Ondarza advises farmers to give cows extra room so the animals feel contented and comfortable. Conversely, bankers might encourage farmers to pack their barns tightly and be as efficient with space as possible.



Mary Beth de Ondarza spoke at the Kemptville Dairy Day on Fri., Feb 13 about the importance of cow nutrition.
Press Photo — Smith-Millar

"It's always a balancing act," she said.

Farmers also have to make sure that cows aren't sorting through their feed, picking the food they like best while leaving the fibre.

"Generally, they are sorting to get the grain," said de Ondarza.

If the feed is longer than the width of a cow's mouth, said de Ondarza, cows can sort through their food. Cutting it a bit shorter, or adding water to the feed, will stop the cattle from sorting.

"Add the water to make the grain more sticky," de Ondarza explained.

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