



Unlocking the Potential  
for Peak Milk

## **Stocking Density for Dry Cows**

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- Stocking density may be measured either by cows per free stall or bunk space per cow.
- “It is our opinion (Nordland and Others) that bunk space per cow is vastly more important as a risk factor for transition cow ketosis than stall stocking density, and the current focus on stall stocking density frequently misses the most important factor in fresh cow disease – decreased dry matter intake.”
- “We expect the lowest rank third of the pen to show reduced productivity when bunk space is limited.” (Nordland and Others)
- Research predicts that dry cow stall stocking densities greater than 80 percent may result in reduced milk production in subsequent lactation.
- At 120 percent dry cow stall stocking density predicts a 6.4 pounds per day loss while at 130 percent density the loss is predicted to be close to 8 pounds per day loss.
- Start planning now for avoiding excessive dry and pre-fresh stocking density – talk with your veterinarian about predicting calving pressures and alternatives to manage dry and pre-fresh stocking density to unlock the potential for peak milk.

References: Kenneth Nordland, N. Cook and G. Oetzel, “Commingling Dairy Cows: Pen Moves, Stocking Density and Health.” Proceedings American Association of Bovine Practitioners, St. Paul MN Sept 20-24, 2006, pp 36-42. Black, R.A. and Others, “Short-term changes in stocking density did not alter meal characteristics of lactating Holstein dairy cattle.” Journal of Dairy Science 99:6572-6577 (2018). Krewczel, P.D. and Others “Effect of stocking density on indices of cow comfort.” Journal of Dairy Science 91:1903-1907 (2008).

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