

# COW SIGNALS<sup>®</sup>

TRAINING COMPANY

Soft beds for cows is  
the new standard

Update from the field  
on Dutch dairy farming

By Joep Driessen

# Update on Dutch dairy farming

## ROUGH ESTIMATIONS:

**400 barns started with dried manure in the cow beds (cubicles/box) the last 2 years.** (synonym: bio bedding, green bedding, solids, separated manure with 32% dry matter). It seems to work very well. It is soft and dry and we do not see too many risks for more mastitis and cell count when managed well. Good ventilation, daily cleaning 3x and weekly filling. Some go for daily filling. Start with little layers so it can dry after you put it into the beds.

**40 barns with sand cubicles:** Most of our 500 new barns (made by: vetvice-cowsignals barn design team, vetvice.com ) have deep bedded cubicles. The most chosen is the save option of chopped straw mixed with water and limestone (1:1:4). This also works well with our traditional slatted floors. Sand however is in our opinion the best options (good hygiene, soft, cool in summer and excellent grip on the concrete floors!)

Most of the new sand bedded barns have very low mastitis and cell count percentage... Less than 5% mastitis cases per year! (Dutch average mastitis percentage is 28% treated cases per year). Most of our new barn designs have a soft bed, a stress free calving line for 5-10% of the cows, automatic selection and a good handling/treatment square with treatment box. This provides happy cows and happy farmers!!

### **40 barns without cubicles: Free ranging barn.**

This is the best solution for cows. Some have straw pack. Most have woodchips with sawdust pack. Some have compost as bedding.

Straw pack is the best option: always dry and absorbing. You need 10m<sup>2</sup> resting area per cow with av. production of 10.000 litre per year. And you need 10kg of straw per cow per day. This is how we design our stress free calving lines for the cows 3 weeks before and 3 weeks after calving.

The composting barns with woodchips are quite wet several months per year (spring and autumn). Then you have to add a lot of sawdust daily...

The compost barns (they ad compost daily or weekly) are working well, but also get very wet several months per year. Farmers ad 15.000 kg compost per cow per year (7 winter months only, summer is dry enough if well ventilated and solar radiation through transparent plastic folio roof).

**COMMENT BY JOEP DRIESSEN:**

Free ranging barns: a very interesting cow friendly system. Key success factors are feed water light air rest and space... ! Spacey deep sand / straw cubicles are probably almost as good as this free ranging pack... It is your choice!

Big success factor is the freedom to eat. We recommend 70 cm feed space per cow, and a concrete lane where the cows can stand, always on the same level. You can put rubber here for the cows to stand on during the 6 hours eating. Scraping of this area every 2 hours is a must. Free access from resting to feeding is another big thing. So do not create barriers!!

First step for many dairymen and women in the world is to start experimenting with deep beds!! Start with your dry cow cubicles. Make them deep, large and soft! With free head swing space. They will love it... and you will love it...! Good luck!

Kind regards  
Joep Driessen

*" Let your cows do the talking. Read their body language  
and let them live happily and twice as long".*

Look forward to see you in Holland for a unique Dutch dairy experience!!

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