Need to Know

How to clean beef cattle holding structures

As important producers of food, farmers and others involved in agriculture are expected to do their part. This includes ensuring the safety and hygiene of animals and their environments.

KNOW ABOUT CLEANING OUT MANURE

Manure should be scraped from around feeders and waterers on a regular basis to keep cattle clean. Bedded packs can continue to build until clean out is necessary.

If an outside yard is used, it should be scraped on a regular basis. Storage should be provided for the manure, and manure and yard run-off should be controlled so it doesn’t enter surface or groundwater.

Mature cattle can produce .03 to .04 m$^3$ of solid manure per animal per day. Liquids should be drained to a containment area. Use straw to help build up a manure pack and allow easier manure removal. This is especially important in calving areas.

Manure should be removed from pens and sheds as soon as field conditions allow it to be spread. A smooth tracked, small crawler tractor with bucket causes the least damage to dirt lots. Wheeled loaders must be operated carefully to prevent digging up the pen base. If weather conditions prevent spreading on fields directly, manure should be stockpiled and spread at a later date. Manure should be spread and tilled under to reduce fly populations and odour.

KNOW ABOUT CLEANING & DISINFECTING PROCEDURES

Early cleanout of pens and sheds is a good management practice that:

- Provides a healthier environment for cattle remaining in confinement
- Improves feed conversion and average daily gain
- Keeps cattle cleaner
- Reduces fly populations
- Reduces intensity of odours
- Reduces volume of contaminated runoff to be contained.
It is usually more convenient to own pen cleaning equipment because frost and bad weather can make it necessary to clean in stages. Use of custom manure cleaning companies is becoming more common.

When the same area is used for calving each year, calf scour problems usually arise. Proper cleaning will minimize or prevent this from occurring.

Cow/calf wintering sheds can be cleaned using a high pressure sprayer and disinfectant. Without a thorough cleaning, disinfecting has little effect. Manure must be completely removed from shed or barn walls. If plenty of water is available, soak the manure thoroughly to make it easier to remove.

A sprayer is easier to use than scrapers and scrub-brushes. The sprayer should develop at least 500 psi, or 3500 kPa, of pressure. Low volume, high pressure sprayers operating at 1000 psi, or 7000 kPa, do an excellent job of cleaning. Veterinarians can provide advice on the most effective disinfectants to use.

Because hazards and risks vary, what works for one farm may not always be effective for another. Every cattle producer should develop, in consultation with their veterinarian, a plan for ensuring the health, cleanliness and safety of their animals.

Points to remember for cleaning and disinfection procedures

• Scoop out all fecal matter from floors first. Transport fecal matter by wheel barrel to an area where uncontaminated animal waste is collected and stored. Sweep floors as well.
• Spray and clean the livestock housing and treatment areas, such as chute systems, rails, chutes, walls, doors and floors, using a pressure washer with hot water and detergent. All areas should be scrubbed, washed and free from any contaminants.
• Dry all areas. If necessary, use a squeegee to remove as much water as possible.
• After the area is cleaned and dry, cover it with a disinfectant solution. Use a dilution device if necessary. Ensure the area is dry before bringing livestock into it again.

Points to remember for cleaning and disinfecting equipment and barns

• Clean all equipment before disinfecting.
• Clean and disinfect equipment after use and before it is used with new animals.
• Avoid sharing equipment with other farms and store it in secure locations.
• User personal protective equipment — gloves, coveralls and impermeable, or waterproof, footwear with shallow treads. Deep treads hold organic material that can hold organisms and transmit disease.
• Clean surfaces first. Organic materials reduce the effectiveness of most disinfectants.
• Document your cleaning record, including products used, concentration, mixing procedure, volume used, area covered, safety procedures, drying conditions and cleaner used.
• Use warm or hot water to mix disinfectants, as most are more effective in warm water.
Points to remember for cleaning and disinfecting transport vehicles

- After unloading livestock, the vehicle should be fully cleansed and disinfected. This should happen within 24 hours after it is unloaded.
- Wheels, wheel arches and mud flaps must always be cleansed and disinfected whenever the vehicle is cleansed and disinfected.
- Do not move from dirty to clean areas with equipment that has not been disinfected.

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