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## Two types of housing systems for dairy animals

Important details: There is a need for enough space behind and in between the animals tied inside the shed.Photo: Special Arrangement

Proper shelter plays a key role in improved milk production in dairy animals by protecting them from extreme weather conditions besides providing comfort.

“Generally, in Haryana, farmers do not provide shelter to their dairy animals except very few who have adopted improved production technology for dairy farming or are maintaining both high milk yielding buffaloes and crossbred cows,” says Dr Rajinder Singh, Senior Extension Specialist (Animal Sciences), Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Extension Center, Rohtak, Haryana.

**Direct expose**

If kept in the open, the animals, especially cows, start feeling uneasy as they are exposed to direct sun during day and cold wind during the night. This affects their feed intake and also their milk production. The University has always been stressing the importance of proper shelter for milch cattle and conducts training programmes and personal visits to well maintained dairy units for farmers so that they can get first hand knowledge. Normally cattle farmers do not provide sufficient space for the animals inside a shed. This often results in competition among the animals for feed and social interaction which may sometimes result in some of them turning a little violent. In Haryana two types of ‘housing systems’ are generally used in dairy livestock management. Closed and loose housing system. A closed system is comparatively costlier and only big farmers having a large number of cattle can afford it. Loose housing system on the other hand, is based on choice, and more suitable for small farmers who have high yielding animals. It costs less since local material is used for building, is airy and can be altered according to the changes in the climatic conditions.

**Main operations**

Main dairy operations comprise feeding, milking , cleaning and looking after animal health. Major operations like milking, cleaning are all performed only at the rear side of animals. “We always stress on the need for enough space behind and in between the animals tied inside the shed because it makes movement easy for the person to clean and milk the animals. It also enables the farmer to spot problems related to udder health (mastitis) and other sicknesses of dairy animals quickly.

**Lesser time**

“We refer to this as ‘tail to tail’ system. It has proved beneficial to dairy farmers because the time spent in dairy operations in tail system is 15 per cent less than the time spent in head to head system,” explains Dr. Singh. Before constructing a shed it is advisable for farmers to check whether they have continuous electricity supply since uninterrupted power is a must for clean and disease free animals housed inside sheds. They must also take care to see that the floor of the shed is hard, non slippery, easy to clean and sloping on one side for the water to run off into a drainage system. Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene inside the shed is an essential part of successful dairy management.

Farmers are advised to keep the shed free of flies and other insects especially during summer and monsoon by either spraying or dusting suitable insecticides and pest repellants based on advice of their local veterinarians, according to

Dr. Singh. Following right milking technique is important because it is the quality and the production of milk which can prove a boon or bane in dairy farming.

**Some suggestions**

The following practice can be followed: Stick to regular milking hours as far as possible and equal milking intervals. After washing the udder with some antiseptic and wiping it with a clean cloth, practise dry and full hand milking method followed by stripping. Complete the milking quickly (within 5-7 minutes), gently (without any physical stress) and quietly (without much noise).

## To know more interested farmers can contact

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