



Group Care of Dairy Calves

NWNY Farms Invest \$3.4 Million

OPPORTUNITY - *Group housed dairy calf systems offer:*

- More favorable work conditions
- Labor savings and efficiency
- More natural calf feeding environment
- More efficient calf growth with intensified feeding
- Potential for greater first lactation milk yield



TARGET AUDIENCE - *Dairy Farms*

- Owners and managers
- Workers with calf care responsibilities
- Advisors and agri-business representatives

EXTENSION'S EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE -

Beginning in early 2011, Cornell Cooperative Extension's North West New York's Dairy Livestock and Field Crops Team (NWNY Team) partnered with Cornell University faculty, agribusiness and producers to assess calf and financial performance on farms adopting a new group housing and feeding strategy for baby calves; followed by outreach.

OUTCOMES -

Performance results and management strategies for the system were conveyed to 300 producers in NWNY and 1,700 in total across state.

- NWNY meetings and tours of new or renovated facilities
- Statewide Symposia in 2011 and 2012 attracted 550 people
- 6 Regional Winter Dairy Management Workshops in 2012—260 people in attendance across New York



IMPACT - *Since educational work began in 2011*

- 19 NWNY farms implemented group housing systems
- Aggregate estimated capital investment
 - \$2.7 Million in buildings and improvements
 - \$735,000 in equipment
- 1,000 pounds, or about 120 gallons, more first lactation milk from each cow raised on this system with intensified early life nutrition
- Conservatively, for the 19 farms in NWNY who now use the system, that's over an estimated \$1.7 million increase in annual revenue



Jeff True,
True Farms Inc.,
Perry, NY

"The biggest impact has been on the redistribution of labor, more time is spent observing the calves in their natural environment. The bottom line for us is that we don't want to go back to hutches! I figured we are saving approximately \$50 per calf versus the traditional system. That's \$24,000 in calf raising cost each year."



Dave Wolf
Maplelawn Farm,
Lyons, NY

"With group housing, farms can capture the benefits of feeding calves more than twice a day without incurring prohibitive labor costs. Waste milk is fed ad-lib, allowing for improved nutrient intake, hydration and buffering. Our calves are a little taller than before and certainly carrying more flesh as they transition. When they move at weaning, they are moving into a pen with the same calves they have been with since birth."



Corwin Holtz,
Holtz-Nelson Dairy
Consultants, LLC, Dryden, NY

"My first viewing (of the group housed calf system) was both a shock and surprise as to how well the system was working and I knew right then that this was a concept which I had to visit with my clients about. The health, growth and socialization of these calves was more than I could have ever imagined. As animal welfare continues to be a growing issue that our industry must deal with, I view these systems as being a very positive change versus individual housing with limited access for calves to move."



Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities