

## Comfort for Cows

“Comfort for cows” – symbolised by a cow enjoying the pleasures of being coddled by a rotating stable brush – has been a fixed parameter for dairy farmers and manufacturers of barn equipment for years.

And yet, “comfort for cows” is far more than just the provision of a stable brush.

What do cows really need? Which environment fulfils the needs of the animals and allows for their natural behavioural repertoire?

With ethology, the theory of behaviour, science has instruments at hand to explore the behaviour of livestock. Professorships in Livestock Ethology give evidence of the importance which not only today is ascribed to this field of research and its tangible influence on modern animal husbandry. Along with scientific findings, also the willingness to take decisive account of behavioural patterns of livestock has grown on the part of advisory services, livestock owners and manufacturers of barn equipment.

The adequate design of the cubicles with sufficient space according to the size of the cows for example is as important as sufficient space in the front area to allow for swinging of cows’ heads. Lying comfortably is a need of cows as they prevent hyperacidity of their first stomach by intensive rumination while lying down. Blood circulation in the udder also is considerably better when cows are lying instead of standing. New bedding and litter materials are therefore intensively tested for acceptance and lying behaviour prior to their market launch.

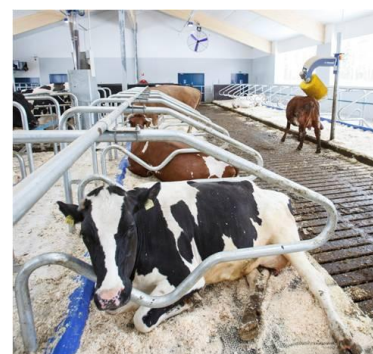
In addition to lying comfort, surface quality in barns also relates to the floor in all spaces available for movements of cows. Comfortable movements play an important role in avoiding social stress and injuries in the herd, at the same time ensuring good claw health.

On average, a cow spends between five and six hours per day taking up food. The right design of feeding places therefore ensures sufficient food uptake. In order to make access to water also easier for cows with lower ranks in the herd, a sufficient number of troughs must be available. Furthermore, ethologic studies have shown that cows prefer to take up water from “stagnant water bodies” – and this is also true inside modern barns. In addition to common cup drinkers, larger basin troughs are therefore often offered today.

These few examples already show how barn layout in modern animal husbandry takes account of natural behavioural patterns of cows, and how up-to-date scientific findings are taken up in the development and construction of stables by manufacturers of barn equipment – to even further increase the “comfort for cows”.



The bristles of the rotating stable brush stimulate blood circulation – keeping cows in better health (photo: DeLaval)



The layout of the cubicles is one prerequisite for cow comfort (photo: DeLaval)



Cows prefer to take up water from troughs with “stagnant water” (photo: FNL)