

Straw Bedded Yards

Stocking density on straw yards has a significant effect on animal cleanliness. Remember, extra straw will not compensate for overstocking. The amount of straw required will depend on factors such as stocking density, animal weight, diet and shed design.

Preventative Steps

- Avoid overstocking.
- Provide a sufficient amount of fresh straw as required.
- Ensure the house is adequately ventilated and drained.

Animal Health

Remember, stressed animals are more prone to infections caused by bacteria responsible for foodborne disease. Therefore, good herd health management plays a vital role in minimising the risks associated with dirty hides.

Preventative Steps

Ensure:

- Animals are routinely dosed for gastrointestinal parasites to prevent parasitic scours
- Sick animals are isolated in suitable facilities and professional help sought, if required
- Animals have unrestricted access to straw, hay or high dry matter silage for 48 hours before slaughter.
- Animals have unrestricted access to water
- Animals are handled humanely and are not subjected to undue stress, as stressed animals are more likely to release pathogenic bacteria and in particular, *E. coli* O157:H7

You should never:

- Starve animals immediately prior to sale
- Clip animals immediately before transport to slaughter.



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Clean livestock

Your contribution to clean food



Many potentially harmful organisms are present in the gut, faeces and hides of healthy cattle, sheep and goats. These organisms include, among others, *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, which are responsible for foodborne illness in humans.

Healthy animals carrying these organisms may show no symptoms. It is not possible to distinguish carrier animals from non-carrier animals by visual inspection alone. Therefore, it is vitally important that you make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the animals you supply for slaughter or present for milking are as clean and dry as possible.

Remember

- Hides contain harmful bacteria.
- The hide is a source of possible contamination of meat during the dressing of an animal in the slaughter plant.
- The dirtier the hide of animals presented for slaughter, the greater the potential for carcass contamination and therefore, the greater the risk to human health.
- Wet hides increase the risk of contamination.
- It is essential that all animals presented for slaughter comply with the Irish Clean Livestock Policy.
- The objective is to produce meat from slaughtered animals which is free from faecal contamination.
- To help control harmful bacteria, the teats, udders, tails and flanks of milking animals must be clean before milking.
- Sheep presented for slaughter should be dagged to prevent soiling of the fleece.

While it is recognised that it may be difficult to ensure that animals are completely free from faecal contamination, due care in the following animal husbandry practices will ensure cattle are as clean as possible.

Diet

The type of diet fed to animals has a significant effect on cleanliness.

- Diets based on low dry matter silage and/or roots are likely to produce dirtier animals due to production of large quantities of wet dung.
- The addition of cereals to certain diets may increase the level of faecal contamination.
- Sudden changes in diet lead to digestive upsets and possible scouring.

Preventative Steps

- As far as possible, provide animals with free access to straw or other suitable long fibre.
- Alternatively, incorporate hay, straw or other suitable long fibre into the diet for two weeks immediately prior to slaughter.
- Always make diet changes gradually.

Housing

Poor housing type and design are significant contributory factors in the soiling of hides with faeces. It is important that animal housing is designed, sited, constructed, maintained and managed in a manner that guarantees adequate space, ventilation, floor drainage and a dry lying area.

In cubicle systems, dairy cows must be provided with a sufficient number of adequately sized clean comfortable cubicle spaces.

Slatted Housing

The correct stocking rate is essential throughout the housing period, as both over stocking and under stocking limit the treading of dung through the slats, giving rise to excess soiling of hides. Milking animals must not be housed exclusively on slats, they must have access to cubicles or bedded yards.

Preventative Steps (for cattle on slats)

Ensure:

- Correct stocking densities are maintained as far as possible throughout the fattening period
- Stocking densities are dependent on size and nature of pens as well as type of animal
- Slatted housing is kept in a clean condition and is properly ventilated
- Extra care is taken with your cleaning programme immediately prior to slaughter.