

Does it pay to overbuild transition cow facilities?

The old adage says, "The most expensive thing on a dairy is an empty stall."

Dr. Ken Nordlund counters that statement. "The most expensive thing on a dairy is a prefresh stall that is always full."

His research shows that providing sufficient bunk space and comfortable stalls are two of the key factors for transition cow success. But what is the price tag on that success, and is it worth the cost? The example illustrates the payback of investing in transition cow comfort on a 1,000-cow dairy.

Assumptions: 1,000-cow dairy = 1050 calvings per year, or 20 calvings per week.


	Traditional transition cow barn	Transition-cow-friendly barn
Stall size	45 inches X 66 inches	50 inches X 70 inches
Cost per stall	\$2,500	\$2,800
Number of stalls	120	162
Prefresh	60	84 (140% of avg. weekly calving rate)
Post-fresh	60	78 (130% of avg. weekly calving rate)
Cost to build barn	\$300,000	\$453,600
Added cost		\$153,600

For 1,000-lb TCI improvement

 **INCOME OVER FEED COST**
117.00 per cow per year

ADDED MONTHLY COST
-34.78 per cow per year

=

INCREASED INCOME DUE TO TRANSITION-COW-FRIENDLY HOUSING
 **82.22** per cow per year

PROJECTED PROFIT FROM TRANSITION-COW-FRIENDLY BARN:

\$18/cwt*
X
50 percent IOFC**
X
1,300 pounds***
=
 **117.00** INCREASED PROFIT per cow, per year

*Milk price of \$18 per hundredweight (cwt).

**Income over feed cost (IOFC) at 50 percent of gross milk price.

***1,300 pounds of increased milk per cow per lactation is the conservative observation on dairies that improve stall comfort, feed space availability and social stability for transition cows. This figure is based on TCI data.

Amortize added cost of
\$153,600
over 5 years at 5% interest:

Added monthly payment:
\$2,898.62

Total added cost per year:
\$34,783.44

For a 1,000-cow dairy:
\$34.78 per cow per year