

FACTS

BEDDING

Bedding is used through all phases of cattle production to provide comfort, insulation, protection and traction. It confirms the producer's commitment to animal care, biosecurity and on-farm food safety. Bedding materials may vary in composition but should be free from chemicals and weed seeds. Bedding provides improved comfort, health and cleanliness benefits.



ANIMAL CARE

CALVING/WINTERING SITES

Access to clean, abundant bedding enables livestock to perform better and have improved health, growth and weight maintenance. Bedding in calving sites must be changed and refreshed regularly to stay clean and reduce incidence of disease transmission amongst calves such as scours. In cold weather, bedding provides insulation against the bare ground and reduces mud and manure build-up on hides, which can increase heat loss. Cattle will maintain and gain better if bedding is provided because feed consumed is directed towards productivity rather than trying to stay warm.

TRANSPORTATION

During long-haul and/or transportation of high risk animals, adequate bedding in trailers can provide traction, minimize stress and decrease the incidence of injury. At rest stops, bedding allows cattle to rest comfortably and reduce the risk of illness at their final destination.

BIOSECURITY

DISEASE TRANSMISSION

Used bedding and manure should be disposed of safely and regularly to prevent transfer of disease pathogens between animals and their environment. Local regulations for manure disposal should always be followed.

CATTLE IN TRANSIT

Manure and dirty bedding should be removed from trucks and trailers in between loads and before entering premises to reduce the risk of spreading disease. If you use your own equipment to haul cattle to other premises, clean before leaving your premise and clean again before returning to your farm. Before cleaning and removing bedding material, make sure a designated cleaning site is used or permission is obtained if on farm.

Note Weed seeds may not be a health issue for cattle, but bedding containing noxious weeds which can have a long-term effect on the operation with increased labour and chemical control costs.*

FOOD SAFETY

Most bedding materials are by-products from crop or lumber. If wood chips, shavings, hog fuel, or other forms of processed wood is used for bedding, ensure the wood has not been treated with preservatives. Many of these products are carcinogenic and have an unknown long-term effect on soil and water. In the case of straw, if the crop was treated with pesticides or herbicides, a "safe to use" withdrawal date must be calculated to prevent potential residues in the cattle.

VBP+ Certified producers require written or verbal assurance from the supplier that bedding products are not contaminated with toxins, chemicals or foreign substances.

For more information on the benefits of bedding visit

<https://www.beefresearch.ca/research-topic.cfm/on-farm-practices-to-improve-food-safety-74>

and <https://www.beefresearch.ca/blog/cold-enough-for-you-bergen/>

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