




A PRODUCER GUIDE TO EVALUATING NESTING SCORES

Calf managers want simple and economical solutions to their calf health challenges. Not every problem can be solved with an easy solution, but three calf care challenges-respiratory disease, scours, and reduced growth-can all be minimized with an easy fix: deep straw bedding.

Nesting scores should be evaluated when the calf is lying down. It is important to provide lots of dry, long, straw bedding when it is cold to provide insulation for the calf. There should be enough bedding

for the calf to nestle down in it to reduce heat loss and for further protection from drafts. Add bedding often instead of adding large amounts all at once. This will keep the top layer fluffy (rather than compacted) and dry.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison has developed a nesting score system. During different times of year, producers may be looking for a different type of score. Adding a calf coat can also impact the nesting score.

| Nesting Score | | Description |
|---------------|---|---|
| 1 |  | <p>When the calf is lying down, bedding does not cover any part of the foot or leg. This nesting score would be observed in the summer, when the calf is bedded with sand or shavings, but is not appropriate for winter.</p> |
| 2 |  | <p>When the calf is lying down, it is nestled slightly in the bedding. Part of upper leg is visible, and part of the lower leg is covered by bedding. In the winter, this score would indicate there is not enough bedding to nest in, unless the calf is wearing a calf jacket, which can increase the nesting score by 1.</p> |
| 3 |  | <p>Deep straw bedding allows a calf to nest and trap warm air around their body. When calves are lying down, their legs should not be visible. Usually 3 to 4 inches (7.6 to 10 centimetres (cm)) of shavings topped with 12 inches (30 cm) of straw is ideal.</p> |

Do not forget to do the kneel test!

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