



## Calf Barn Ventilation

As another Wisconsin winter approaches many people will begin to close their calf barns as the temperatures plummet. While individual calf hutches are still considered the “gold standard” for raising calves, it’s becoming commonplace to raise calves in an enclosed barn. There are a number of benefits to this, like being able to stay warm while working calves and not having their water/milk freeze. While these benefits are great, air quality is often an issue in these facilities - especially when they weren’t designed with calves in mind.

When retrofitting an older facility for housing calves, or designing a new facility for calves, having a way to introduce fresh air from the outside is a critical design component. Newer calf barns are often built with positive pressure tube systems designed to bring in fresh air from the outside. Older barns can be retrofitted with these systems, but it’s easier to design your barn with this in mind from the start. A properly designed system will exchange the air in a calf barn 4 times per hour. This frequency of air exchange will help to reduce the buildup of bacteria in the air without dropping the ambient temperature more than a few degrees. It should be designed to direct the air at the locations where calves live, without creating a draft. This system is **not** the same as one designed to cool your calves in the summer, as that requires a far greater amount of airflow than one designed to exchange fresh air.

These systems are not “one size fits all” systems, and should be built with **your** barn in mind. The most frequent work we do with these systems is investigating why the system someone else designed isn’t working properly. This is typically because the original designer only has access to the products which they sell, and they have supplied a farm with a system with shortfalls created by forcing their product into the design - which may not be an adequately sized fan for the barn or the tube wasn’t custom designed for the barn in question.

While Mondovi Veterinary Service may not be able to provide “one stop” shopping for positive pressure tube design and installation, you will get a positive pressure tube system designed specifically for your barn in accordance with guidelines from The Dairyland Initiative. It will be designed with products selected to meet the requirements of your calf barn, not just what is available in the shop. While this can often result in a more expensive system, it’s a system that will work right, the first time - and that’s going to save you a lot in the long run when you factor in decreased calf growth, morbidity and mortality, and the cost of antibiotics.