

Increase milk productivity by using cow mats

Many farmers have wondered how cow mattresses look. They are mostly black in colour and are made from remains of rubber tyres, high quality enough to sustain your animal for long before replacing, writes **Fred Muzaale**

Many dairy farmers pay little attention to the comfort they provide to their dairy cows for high milk production. Many of them emphasize proper feeding to their animals, forgetting that provision of comfort to the animals, is equally paramount.

Improper animal husbandry practices have a direct impact on output. Mr Bruhan Lugoloobi, the proprietor of LUBUS Dairy Farm and Information center, in Ntooke village, Kayunga District says comfort has a direct influence on how long cows are healthy and productive.

This, Lugoloobi stresses, can be done by improving their environment. He says a farmer needs to provide cow mats to his/her animals to rest or sleep on.

"The cow mats, which a farmer places in the cages where the cows stay provide a comfortable environment for



A dairy cow resting on a mattress inside its shelter. Right the farmer picks the mattress for cleaning. PHOTOS BY FRED MUZAALÉ

the cows to lie on," Lugoloobi says, adding, "Cows need a soft and clean resting surface plus sound footing."

Lugoloobi explains that if a dairy cow is not comfortable, it will not relax as it will move up and down looking for somewhere comfortable enough to sleep or rest.

These movements, he says, will use up energy which it would have used

in the production of milk.

"A dairy cow that is edgy will not produce a lot of milk, hence creating losses to the farmer," he says.

Cleaning cow mats

He says the cow mat should be cleaned with water whenever it gets dirty. This is because when it gets dirty, a cow will not sleep on it anymore. Since it is made of spongy plas-

195,000

COST IN SHILLINGS OF A SINGLE COW MATTRESSES



tic tissue, it is easy to clean and can be put back immediately after cleaning.

Cost

Lugoloobi says in Uganda, very few dairy farmers use cow mats, hence very agro-input shops sell them.

He, however, says the few that use them buy them from neighbouring Kenya, where they are widely used

by farmers. One cow mat goes for Shs195,000 and lasts more than five years, depending on the handling. Patrick Muhumuza a dairy farmer in Kiruhura says he has seen his milk production more than double since he introduced mats at his farm.

It works

Cows, just like humans, give more if treated well. Muhumuza contents that treating your cows well does not necessarily mean you have to be an animal scientist professional for things to work right, "It is simply being passionate in your dairy farming and learning from successful dairy farms to know what your animals require," says Muhumuza.

Many farmers have wondered how cow mattresses look like. They are mostly black in colour and are made from remains of rubber tyres, high quality enough to sustain your animal for long before replacing.

The recycled tires are treated with anti-fungal and anti-bacterial solutions that make them safe for animals. They have a special text pattern that ensures cows do not or fall, even when wet.

Farouk Mujumba the CEO Nju Group of Companies has embraced this technology. "The mats are of varying thickness size most common ones being the 2-inch and the 4-inch thick sizes," says Mujumba.