

Tip of the Month – June 2020

Stress from heat and breath control

Checking the rumination is known to most livestock farmers, but do you also check “Breath control”?

Under normal conditions, at rest and lack of high temperatures, the cow breathes about 40 times per minute. This can be counted on the left side of the cow.

When a cow is too hot, making it difficult to lose its heat, or is bothered for other reasons, breaths count per minute can increase.

At over 60 breaths a minute it is no longer fun for the cow, then she stays up longer since standing up causes more heat loss than lying down. She could also hang above the water trough. Above 80 breaths per minute she is experiencing serious heat stress.

Remember that a cow’s “pleasant outside temperature” is about 8 degrees lower than ours. In addition to that, a cow that gives a lot of milk is hard at work. So, she can get warm quickly!

And warm weather, especially in combination with higher humidity, can also result in 5 – 12% less (rough) feed intake. And she can suffer from that for longer than the heat lasts.

That is why having a cool place for the cow in the summer, is vital. For both longer production and showing heats; and therefore, for fertility!

By counting the breaths every now and then, preferably from high-yielders, you will see earlier whether the ventilation or cooling are sufficient and whether there is sufficient fresh air in the house!