

# Standing off, feed pads and shelters

Summary of a field day held for SMASH

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Three field days were jointly hosted by DairyNZ and SMASH in Waikato and Taranaki in April/May 2012. They provided smaller herd farmers with information on stand-off, feed pads and shelters. This document summarises the key points that were covered on the day.

## Planning

An important initial step is to be clear about what you are trying to achieve by installing the facility. You need to have a good understanding of your farm system and work through your long term plans. Be efficient as possible with existing resources on-farm first.

Consider the different areas of the farm business and the challenges within each, including:

- feed supply and demand (including growing and utilising pasture),
- cow performance,
- people,
- environment: water and nutrients (including effluent).

## Identify the drivers of the farm system change

These will include:

- genetic gain of the herd,
- availability and price of supplements,
- risk: climate and income volatility,
- profitability rather than production,
- environmental and animal welfare compliance.

The facility will become another management tool for your farm. Once the decision has been made to go ahead with installing the facility then it's time to look at the options. Not only is the type of structure important but thought also needs to be put into how to capture and manage effluent. Consider all the options and do your homework.

## Plan, plan, plan

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What regulations must be met?
- How frequently do cows need to be off pasture?
- How many cows need to be accommodated and for how long?
- Will you feed out supplements (type, amount, timing, and wastage)?
- What future expansion / intensification of the business is planned?
- What can you afford? Look at cost - capital outlay and on-going return on investment (ROI)?
- Where will the structure be located on the farm?

- How will the effluent be managed?
- Do you need a resource and / or building consent?

## Design considerations

### 1. Location

Take the time to get it right and consider:

- visibility and distances,
- services and accessibility,
- proximity to waterways and prevailing wind.

### 2. Nutrient and effluent management

- consider this at the start of the planning process,
- capture and use all effluent and associated nutrients,
- calculate the volume of effluent produced,
- get a design specialist to run the Dairy Effluent Storage Calculator to work out storage required,
- consider solids capture and how it will be managed,
- use the **Overseer**<sup>®</sup> Nutrient Budget to calculate effluent application area.

### 3. Animal management

- cow comfort,
- area per cow (don't scrimp),
- don't overstock the pad,
- use multiple gateways for cow flow and provide options for separate mobs.

### 4. Animal health

- manage lameness, metabolic, tiredness and mastitis issues.

### 5. Surface type and management

- get your surface material ordered early each year,
- pads with well-constructed drainage are more successful.

### 6. Climatic considerations

- use shelter wisely,
- air-flow and sunlight are needed to dry out pads,
- ensure the shelter is warm, and / or cool and dry.

### 7. Feeding and feed management

- do not feed out on the stand-off pad,
- ensure feeding levels are maintained,
- manage feed from bins and troughs to minimise wastage.

### 8. Labour

- management ease and systems,

- staff attractiveness: number, skill level and training.

#### 9. Maintenance

- cleaning and repairs.

#### 10. Access

- for stock and machinery movement,
- take extra care of gateways when moving stock and machinery around.

## General points

Be mindful of the following:

- plan well and don't cut corners,
- be clear on what you are trying to achieve,
- understand the impacts on the farm system,
- be cautious about over-capitalising (both upfront and ongoing costs) and creating a system that is overly complicated,
- cow comfort,
- ease of management and time spent,
- do your homework,
- remember to capture and manage effluent,
- options vary, so talk to industry experts and other farmers,
- make the system work for you rather than you work for the system,
- be resourceful,
- don't cut corners,
- construct properly. If you can't afford to, wait until you can,
- don't put something in just because the neighbour has.

## Useful resources

DairyNZ

- [Minimising muck, Maximising money \(2005\): Stand-off and Feed Pads: Design and Management Guidelines.](#)
- [Minimising muck, Maximising money \(2005\): Stand-off and Feed Pads: Case studies](#)
- [Standing off. A cow's perspective.](#)
- Farmfacts
  - Farmfact 8-2. [Feed pads – design and construction](#)
  - Farmfact 8-3. [Feed pads – management and maintenance](#)
  - Farmfact 8-4. [Stand off pads – design and construction](#)
  - Farmfact 8-5. [Stand off pads – proactive management and maintenance](#)
  - Farmfact 8-6. [Covered pads and barns](#)