

Technical efficiency



Animal Welfare, Society Friendly



Background

Animals suffering from injuries or diseases tend to change their behaviour and have other needs than healthy animals. Animals suffering from infectious disease must be separated from healthy animals to avoid spread of diseases. Use of hospital pens is a solution to handle these challenges.

How is a hospital pen used?

A hospital pen is a place to house injured or diseased animals in order to facilitate their recovery of these animals and in case of infectious disease to protect healthy cows against infection.



Which cows can benefit?

- Diseased cows such as those suffering from mastitis, metritis and pneumonia, as well as injured cows, lame cows and cows with displaced abomasum, benefit.
- In case of infectious disease, the healthy cows will also benefit from infected cows being moved to a hospital pen.



How does housing in hospital pens help?

- It facilitates resting behaviour.
- It ensures less competition for food and water.
- Waiting time at milking is avoided.
- It enables the farmer to monitor and care for the cows.



What are the necessary features of a hospital pen?

- A soft, deep bedding, sand or straw for example.
- Plenty of space per cow in the pen. According to Danish law, min. 12 m² for individual pens and min. 8 m²/cow in group pens (large breeds, e.g. Holstein Friesian).
- Easy access to water and feed.
- Milking equipment.

Investment

- The farmer should maintain sufficient individual and group hospital pens with plenty of space and a soft deep bedding of sand or straw.
- There should always be a space available in a hospital pen and, e.g. a minimum of 1 individual hospital pen per 100 cows.
- Hospital pens can be established in existing barn systems or as integrated in new barn systems.
- The hospital pen is best placed where the staff have easy access to monitor the cows.

Positive features

- Shorter recovery time and larger recovery percentage from many injuries and diseases.
- Hospital pens makes it easier to care for the animals, such as ensuring timely monitoring and treatment.

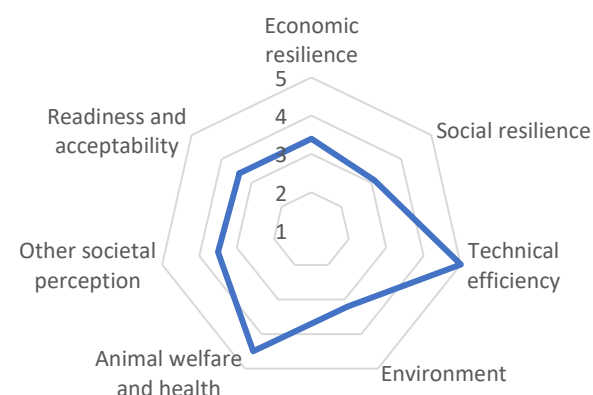
Be careful, especially on these points

- Never use hospital pens for calving, fresh cows or dry cows.
- Make sure to have space available for newly injured or sick cows.
- Maintain good hygiene in hospital pens.

Specific advice

- Cows with infectious disease prefer covered areas, if provided.
- Cows with infectious disease and cows requiring special protection should be housed in an individual pen.
- When reintroducing animals from a hospital pen, be mindful that introducing cows to new social groups has been shown to lead to aggression and decreased feed intake, rumination and lying behavior.
- Use special hospital pens for calves and young stock.

Assessment of method



Quote of the farmer:

"Hospital pens is most often used for lame cows"

DOI: 10.3168/jds.2019-17045
Doi: 10.3168/jds.2015-9937
Doi: 10.3168/jds.2013-7274