

Diagonal Lunging in Free Stalls

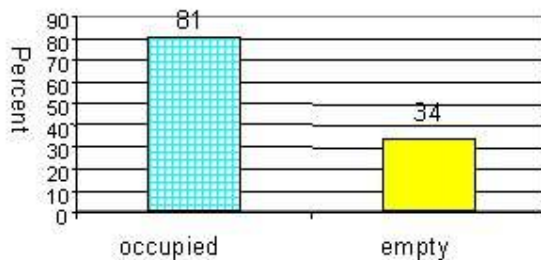
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Diagonal standing or lying in free stalls is of interest because these behaviors affect stall cleanliness, labor, and mastitis related to defecation on the corners of the stalls.

At a study farm with 16-foot, open-front, head-to-head free stalls, cows lunged diagonally 34% of the time when the facing stall was empty and 81% of the time when the stall was occupied ($p < 0.0001$). At another farm, cows lunged diagonally 68% of the time with the original 8-foot closed front stalls and 44% of the time with modified stalls that had open fronts and loops with 38-inch wide side openings ($p = 0.0002$).

A mismatching of the space provided with the space required for normal rising and lying motions appears to contribute to diagonal lunging and standing. Cows that stand diagonally will generally lie diagonally. Obstructions in the space used for head bobbing, or short stalls, may be the greatest contributors to diagonal lunging and lying in the stall. The obstructions could be another cow, a wall, high brisket boards, support pipes, concrete or bedding piled the front of the stall, or the location of the neck rail. Rather than trying to force cows to stand and lie straight with narrower stalls, the solution seems to be more freedom to exhibit normal. The most cow friendly stalls provide the space and necessary freedom to lunge forward and to bob the head down and up. Some naysayers proclaim they cannot afford to build a barn that meets those requirements. Others believe it is their duty of care.

Figure 1. Frequency of diagonal lunging in 16-foot, head-to-head, open-front freestalls with the facing stall occupied or empty.



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