

TABLE 1

Type of top bedding	Pros	Cons
Sawdust	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very absorbent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost• Availability and reliability of supply• Inconsistency of product (several different grades)• Potential for manure storage issues• Associated with klebsiella mastitis• May make soil acidic
Wood byproduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can have more availability• Absorbent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inconsistency of product (several different grades)• Coarsely chopped product negatively impacts comfort
Paper mill byproduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More availability in some areas• Good absorption, absorbs smells	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May become slippery if too wet• Availability and reliability of supply• Potential for other residual parts like plastic or metal• Possible toxicities with ink and clay• Can be moldy
Manure solids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can help ease manure storage and application to land base	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to get dry enough• May become slippery if too wet• May generate heat due to composting, thus fostering bacteria growth
Hydrated lime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces environmental bacteria for 12 to 24 hours (impact is limited)• Neutralizes pH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Too much can burn teat ends• May cause dry and cracked skin
Mixture of other top bedding with hydrated lime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absorbent• Neutralizes pH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to determine the ratio of bedding and hydrated lime
Straw	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good insulation against the cold• Provides comfort• Decent absorption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Availability• Potential for manure system issues
Nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimizes daily operating costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't be penny wise and pound foolish. Saving on top bedding but impacting cow health is not worth it in the end.