

Milk Quality is Never an Accident

Milk quality is never an accident...it takes careful planning and implementation. Low cell count herds have protocols and procedures that address dry cow management, cow handling, facilities, milking procedures and udder preparation. Although some of the particulars vary, the basics are the same. Having procedures in place that would result in milking clean, dry, well stimulated teats is a key. There is no magic bullet to accomplish this, but here are some suggestions.

1. Keep the cows' environment clean. Stall beds, bedded packs, loafing lots, pastures, and cow alleys must be managed to minimize the contamination of teats and udder floor.
2. Bring clean, calm cows into the parlor. Clean cows will have fewer bacteria on their teat ends to be removed during udder preparation. Calm cows achieve better primary oxytocin letdown and milk out quicker, more completely, with less liner slips.
3. Clip or singe udders on a regular basis.
4. Have consistent udder preparation protocols in place that include:
 - Applying an effective pre-dip
 - Allowing pre-dip to remain on the teats for 20-30 seconds
 - Maintaining physical contact with teats (cleaning, fore-stripping) for 10-12 seconds
 - Thoroughly drying teats before attaching units
 - Having units attached approximately 90 seconds after teats are first touched during the udder preparation process
 - Adjusting milking system so that units are removed at the completion of milking to avoid over-milking
5. Maintain milking equipment properly. Pay close attention to the condition of inflations and rubber hoses and change at recommended intervals.
6. Provide fresh feed after milking to keep cows on their feet to allow post-dip to dry and teat ends to close.
7. Have a well communicated and thought-out "game plan" for problem cows and dry off and take extra precautions to insure that teats are cleaned thoroughly to avoid introducing bacteria into the udder when treating for mastitis or during dry cow treatment.

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