



# DAIRYINFO

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*Taking service to another level*

## Cow Milking Prep & Income

Would you like to decrease somatic cell count (SCC)? Would you like to increase milk flow rate and shorten milking time, while improving teat end health? The income maker on any dairy farm is the production of large quantities of high quality milk. So, why is milk prep of your cows often a forgotten priority?

To quickly assess your farm's milking procedure, ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all milking employees trained in the prep procedure established for your farm?
  - Proper milk prep increases milk flow rate considerably. Improving the milk prep procedure can speed up milking times by up to 20% while also improving teat end health.
- How often do you evaluate what's happening in the parlor? Many successful producers would argue that spending at least a few minutes every day in the parlor communicating with employees is among the most profitable and productive time spent managing the dairy farm.
- Are cows stimulated for at least 20 seconds?
  - At least 20 seconds of rubbing and/or cleaning is needed to trigger oxytocin, which stimulates milk let down. Let the cow give you the milk instead of taking it. Without this stimulation, milk can be harvested from the udder but requires longer milking times and may harm udder tissues and teat ends.
- Is teat dip left on the teat for at least 20-30 seconds before wiping the teat end dry?
  - A minimum of 20-30 seconds is needed to kill bacteria on the teat surface
- Is an effort made to specifically clean and dry the teat end?
  - If unsure, have employees prep the cows normally. Then swab the teat end with an alcohol pad. Is there dirt or teat dip left on the pad?
- Is machine attachment occurring within 60-90 seconds after teat stimulation begins?
  - Oxytocin has a short-lived effect; waiting too long to attach the milking machine after stimulation simply wastes its effect.
- How often are employees retrained?
  - Refresher courses for employees can help maintain high milk prep standards. Make sure employees on all shifts are trained in the established procedure.
- Is there a written standard operating procedure for milking preparation posted in the parlor?

- Proper milk prep is one area of management that will pay off handsomely with very little cost. Quicker milking times, lower somatic cell counts and improved teat end health are all dividends of proper milk prep.
- Lastly, a focus on fore-milk stripping, which is the practice of removing two to three squirts of milk from each quarter during the udder prep process. Fore-milk stripping should not be omitted because it serves several important purposes.
  - The cisternal milk, or milk residing in the lower portion of the teat prior to milking, often has a higher bacterial count. Eliminating this milk in two to three squirts of fore-stripping per quarter may improve bulk tank SCC and overall milk quality.
  - Fore-stripping serves as additional stimulation to improve milk let-down and flow rate.
  - Fore-stripping can allow a quick check for signs of clinical mastitis.

Research shows that fore-milk stripping is a proven management practice that serves several purposes, all of which lead to increased milk quality and therefore income. For additional information on milking procedures, the [National Mastitis Council](#) has excellent resources.

We have available an excellent guide to pre- and post-milking procedures. This is available in English and Spanish. Ask us today for a copy!

*(Edited from an article by R. Osborne, Michigan State University Extension, 2012)*



**SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS!**  
**THE TEAM FOR RESULTS**  
*Supporting Agriculture Every Day*

**NEED SEED & PRESERVATIVE? CALL ME!**

*Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job of feeding and managing your cows? Call me!  
My goal is to help you. That's our commitment!*

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**THE TEAM FOR RESULTS**

# HEAT STRESS!

## PLAN AHEAD BEFORE IT HAPPENS!

*Check with me on ideas and tips that can make a valuable difference this summer: reviewing rations, facilities and programs to help reduce the threat and impact of heat stress on your livestock.*

*Your cows will enjoy the difference!*

**Adequate Energy in Rations**

**Airflow and/or Sprinklers  
for Better Cow Cooling**

**Fresh Clean Water at All Times**

**Protection from Direct  
Exposure to the Sun**

## Invest in your livestock this summer!

It is hard to imagine the effects of heat and humidity, which inevitably will plague us in the not too distant future. Among many considerations as we approach summer, is the importance of monitoring the temperature/humidity index (THI) ~ a correlation between actual temperature and the percent of relative humidity. When these [two] indicators increase simultaneously, there is a greater probability that your livestock will experience varying levels of heat stress. Heat stress (at any level) can negatively impact the productivity, profitability and health of your operation. While we are unable to maintain ideal conditions all year-round, it is possible to achieve some relief that can help to reduce the impact of heat stress and its short-term/long-term effects. Equipment maintenance is critical (fans, sprinkler systems, etc.). However, it is equally important to review your entire feed and management programs, determining if a ration provides adequate energy and nutrition to help counter the impact of heat stress, and ensuring you have management plans that are designed to tackle the problems associated with heat stress before they take a toll on livestock. These factors can have a positive impact on your livestock throughout the hot days (and nights) of late spring and summer. Be prepared – and help your livestock to stay cool even during those hot, “dog days” of summer! This is an investment in your herd’s well-being... and your bottom line.



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# May 2012...

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## CHECK IT OUT!

