

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER

At a recent milk quality /milking equipment performance meeting, a lot of attention was directed towards simple observation. It is remarkable how many improvements can be made in milk quality and cow udder health that have little to no cost input. A critical look at milking equipment efficiency including length of long milk hoses, condition of short pulsator lines, overused lines and properly vented claws are a few items that really affect the way cow's milk out. The goal is to remove the cow's milk gently, completely and quickly. It is entirely reasonable to have cow's average unit on time to be 5 minutes or less without compromising teat health. A quick look at your cow's teat ends will let you know if they are being over milked. Rough calloused teat ends is a condition called hyperkeratosis, which is the cows normal reaction to chronic irritation. Roughened teat ends are a harbinger for mastitis causing bacteria. Irritation can be due to excess teat end vacuum either at the beginning or end of milking with poor milk flow rates. Poorly prepped teats prior to milking will delay milk flow. Units with automatic take-offs set too dry and detachment delays set too long will also cause excess teat irritation at the end of milking. Check teats after unit removal. If a lot of them have a ring at the upper end, the cows are over milked. Liners climb up the teat during the end of milking because vacuum levels at the mouth piece increase as milk flow decreases. A quick, easy only true way to assess the degree of over milking is to check strip yields immediately after units come off. This is also a good time to assess the cow's behavior during strip yield measurements. Over milked teats are painful and cows will resent you stripping them out after unit detachment.

The goal is to have 150-250 ml of milk left in the udder, fairly evenly distributed among the 4 quarters. If you have consistently less than 150 ml strip yields, the first ask for automatic takes offs is to reduce the delay from low flow recognition to claw removal. You can ask your dealer what delays are set at and have them reduced by 2-3 seconds. After one week, re-assess strip yields and adjust accordingly. If detachment delays are already at 1-2 seconds, you need to increase the minimum flow rate setting. Change flow rate setting by approximately 50 ml/min/wk and reassess strip yields as above.

Over milking cows either at the beginning or end of milking will ultimately result in irritated teats and more cases of mastitis. New infection rates are a good measure of udder health. Normal rates of <7% will generally coincide with bulk tank somatic cell count decreasing over time. Normal rates of 7-10% typically result in bulk tank somatic cell count bouncing up and down between 200-400,000. Rates of >7% will result in a bulk tank climbing steadily in somatic cell count over time. These herds classically have 3-4 cows responsible for 30-50% of BTSCC. Treating or removing these cows from your herd with no attention to the cause usually results in 3-4 new cows being the big hitters next month. Observation and attention to detail is the key.

We all know that occasionally sick cow cases do not respond positively to treatment . It is the policy of Navan Vet Services that if a cow that we have been attending dies or is euthanized, we will perform a post mortem at no charge to try and determine the cause. If we can gain knowledge from a particular case or disease condition, we all benefit.

As the CQM program continues to roll forward we are asking anyone interested in attending an information session to please contact the clinic. These sessions typically last 1- 1 1/2 hours and are designed to answer any questions on records and S.O.P.'s you might have.

And last, our spring meeting is on April 11th and the topic is SCC, mastitis and treatments. Please call and let us know if you are attending by April 6 so we will know how much food to order.