

Chippewa Veterinary Clinic
Dairy Herd Newsletter
April 1, 2011

Making Quality Milk Simple

There are four major “Myths Related to Quality Milk” that we need to think about if our goal is to produce premium quality milk.

1. **SCC’s go up in the summer when the heat and humidity increase.** Temperature and humidity are not responsible for higher somatic cell counts. Elevated SCC counts are the result of one and only one thing and that is infection in the mammary gland. If you put cows in a nasty environment they will get elevated SCC counts, regardless of the temperature and humidity. In environments where cows can get uncomfortable due to heat and/or humidity, management has to be prepared to make cows comfortable or suffer the consequences of the cow doing the best she can. No matter what part of the country you live in, if cows get uncomfortable as a result of heat stress, they will create a nasty mess trying to stay cool. The cow is concerned about survival, not milk quality.
2. **SCC goes up as DIM increases.** Neither the cow nor any of her four quarters has a clue how long they have been in milk. Again, elevated SCC counts are the result of one and only one thing, and that is infection in the mammary gland. If there is infection in the mammary gland, as days-in-milk goes up and production goes down, SCC’s will absolutely go up because the bacteria continue to multiply at the same speed as when milk production was much higher.
3. **NMC routine sounds good but it is too impractical.** The NMC (National Mastitis Council) milking routine (Strip, Dip, Dry, Apply) was developed by experts in the field of the physiology of lactation and milk quality. It absolutely works without impeding parlor throughput or slowing down the milking process.
4. **It’s ok if cows get dirty between milkings because we can clean them off before milking.** Cleaning up our cows’ living environment and providing a place for them to live where they can be clean and dry is without question the number one factor in producing premium quality milk.

So what does it take to produce excellent quality milk? Excellence has three components, regardless of what task is at hand:

Discipline Discipline is the attitude of life wherein the individual

accepts and embodies the concept of doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do, and for no other reason or reward.

Compliance Compliance means not only knowing what the right thing to do is, but actually doing it and doing it properly and in a timely manner so as to achieve the goal that has been set, no matter what may get in our way.

Accountability Accountability means that we have taken ownership of whatever task is at hand and that regardless of the outcome we are committed to the process to the very end.

Premier milk quality is simple and is based on these basic concepts from which we cannot stray:

1. It is the role of management to set an example for the organization to follow. If it is truly important to ownership and management as evidenced by more than empty talk, it will be treated as “important” by rank and file employees within the organization. Fundamental keys to superior milk quality are discipline, compliance and accountability that starts at the top and flows down through the organization.
2. Somatic cell counts are a key indicator of animal health and milk quality. SCC’s are a direct indication of the prevalence of infection within a cow or a herd and nothing else.
3. The primary key to milk quality is sanitation in every area of the farm. Premier milk quality comes only when every department on the farm is working in unison with that goal in mind.
4. Cows must have a clean, dry place to live that provides protection from extreme temperatures and conditions that are prevalent in the area in which the dairy operates.
5. Time away from feed and resting areas must be minimal. Resultantly, milking routines should be efficient and crisp, yet focused on quality first. Parlor through-put is important, but should not take priority over milk quality and udder health.

From: NMC Regional Proceedings, September 8-9, 2010 David P. Sumrall. Dairy Production Systems, High Springs, Florida.