

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES - APRIL 2013 NEWSLETTER

March 22 brought us our annual Spring Client Meeting in Navan. Thanks to all who took time out of their Friday to attend. This year our speaker was Dr. David Reid, a veterinarian from Wisconsin who has focused his consulting practice on evaluating and solving problems in milking performance of dairy herds. Issues such as high somatic cell count, poor teat conditions, poor milking equipment performance and his coined term “milkability” are his areas of expertise.

Dr. Reid travels internationally to help train people in milking equipment installation, servicing and maintenance, as well as advising 40-4000 cow dairies on how to improve the milkability of their cows.

This month's newsletter will try to summarize most of the important points in Dr. Reid's presentation.

“*Good milkability*” occurs when the unit is attached to properly stimulated cows that have teats full of milk. When the human operator and equipment are working properly, the result should be milk immediately apparent upon unit attachment, quick and complete milkout with a very steady flow of milk. The goal for each milking event should be a sudden slow-down of milk flow and very quick unit removal.

Dr. Reid showed two milk flow curves, one illustrating poor udder prep with poor teat stimulation, the other with proper cow stimulation. The biphasic curve as shown below in Fig.1 is typical of poor cow prep, where milk from the gland cistern will empty very quickly followed by a drop in milk flow.

Graphs will go here

After 30-45 seconds, milk flow increases once again to complete the milkout. A good milk curve as shown in Fig.2 show immediate entry into high flow, maintaining that flow, followed by a quick drop in milk. The longer a cow is on “low flow” the longer her teats are exposed to the higher vacuum and consequently more irritation to teat and teat ends.

Production of good quality milk goes far beyond milking time procedures, and as Dr. Reid reminded us:

“Have a critical look at your dairy, and what to you see?”

Quality milk begins with clean cows. Everything we can do in a dairy to reduce exposure of cows teats to manure will help to deliver a quality product to the consumer. The very best udder prep routine will only reduce bacteria numbers on teats by 80 - 85%, If we start with clean teats, this “end of prep bacteria #” is quite low, however if teats are manure covered, with manure prior to prep, bacteria numbers will still be quite high post prep.

“Why wear gloves when milking?” Besides the fact that we can greatly reduce the spread of contagious bacteria from cow to cow, “we are producing a food product”.

“Attention to Detail & Think Clean” will ultimately solve many milkability issues on a dairy.

Dr. Reid emphasized the importance of properly evaluating milking equipment performance. The National Mastitis Council promotes the systematic testing of milking equipment. There is not another piece of equipment on your dairy that works longer and more often. Frequent checks on regulator and pulsator function can help identify problems before they negatively impact cow teats.

Minimizing loops or drops in long milk hoses will help cows to milk out faster. For tie stalls, ensuring unit alignment and reducing any downwards flow of milk after it leaves the cow will help with milkability. For low line parlours, milk should flow downhill continuously to the milk line. Minimize any upwards movement of milk.

“What do you see?” Don't become complacent about cow cleanliness, climbing “new infection rates”, or somatic cell counts. As your vet to help you critically assess any issues you may have with the milkability of your cows.