

New Device Claims To Save Teats

CHETEK, Wis. — Blue rings circling some cows' rear legs may appear as some sort of new-fangled bovine jewelry, but the rings have supporters who hope they will be successful in preventing teat injuries.

The foam rings are called "teat savers" and are a Japanese product being marketed in the United States through a Wisconsin manufacturer and various distributors.

According to the manufacturer, teat savers are best used in the period just before and after freshening.

The blue rings are placed just above the dew clasp on both rear legs, and they slide the udder away from the leg as the cow gets up from a lying position. This is to prevent the ankle and dew claw from stepping on the teat.

It also provides a cushion under and near the dew claw to keep it from stepping on the teat.

The rings were designed with confinement set-ups such as stanchion barns in mind, because this is where cows often lack sufficient room to get up, according to the manufacturer.

The cross-linked polyethylene foam rings were discovered by Prairie Farm dairy producer Julian Nelson on a visit to Japan in 1988. His family had hosted a Japanese exchange student in 1976 and visited her family 12 years later.

While there, they stopped at several dairy farms. The device, which Nelson had never seen before, was invented by a Japanese veterinarian.

Nelson has been using the device at his farm ever since. "I've never had a cow step on a teat while they've been on," he said.

The dairyman and his wife, Janet, milk 56 cows in a stanchion barn. Teat Savers have replaced the sometimes clumsy cow bras on their farm.

Nelson said he first thought the blue rings were "startling," but many Japanese farmers were using them.

"I had no idea what they were for, but I was real interested in them," he said. He bought two sets before returning home.

Over the next year, Nelson tried to find the manufacturer and patent holder. In 1989, he made contact and was able to buy 50 additional

pairs. One set usually lasts one lactation.

Nelson said he is certain that trying the foam rings on one problem cow will prove to other farmers that they work. However, he doesn't use the rings on all his cows. They are typically used only on those with larger udders, more likely to catch teats underneath their hooves.

"If a cow steps on a teat one day, chances are she'll step on it again another day," he said.

When he was sure they would prevent teat injury for other farmers too, Nelson and some partners formed J.B. Supply Ltd. to import the product for U.S. sale.

Tom Jennings, president of J.B. Supply Ltd., works out of the office, in the basement of a Wisconsin dentist's clinic. He touts the product's simplicity, and that they can be washed off and do not cause tissue injury to the cow.

"It needs to be strong, yet soft," Jennings said. The Teat Savers are made to withstand more than 200

pounds of tensile strength, yet are very lightweight and do not bother the cow.

To adjust the size for an individual cow, inner tabs can be removed.

Replaceable clamps snap the device together once it is around the cow's ankle. For best results, Jennings recommends applying the devices 1½ weeks prior to freshening and allowing them to remain on for at least four months.

When there is no longer a risk of injury, they can be removed.

After attachment, the device is supposed to stay on the leg, unless the cow rubs it along a gutter grate, or her foot and leg gets stuck in mud or manure. Longevity of the ring depends on the type of bedding.

The material used to make the devices was designed specifically for the product. It is the result of a combination of thermal and injection molding. Farmers interested in trying them may write to J.B. Supply Ltd., Box 876, Chetek, Wis., 54728.

New Holstein Classification Programs Bring Favorable Responses

BRATTLEBORO, Vt.—The new classification programs implemented by the Holstein Association USA late last summer are getting favorable responses from dairy producers across the country who like the flexibility and choices with the new programs.

In August 1994, the Association began offering producers six classification participation programs and three scheduling options. This allowed more flexibility to enable breeders to fit classification programs to their individual needs.

The six new programs are: Classic, Standard, Basic, Limited, Introductory, and Breeder's Choice. A review of the 3,679 herds classified between August 1, 1994, and Feb. 28, 1995, reveals that all of the new programs are being used.

Two-thirds of Association members classifying during this period enrolled in the Classic program. Sixty-six percent, or 2,415 herds, took part in this program.

More than 600 herds (17 percent) were enrolled in the Standard program, and 174 herds took part in the Basic program.

A higher percentage took advantage of the Limited program, with 297 herds; and 67 herds

took part in the Breeder's Choice program.

John Neal Scarlett, of Scarletts Dairy in New Market, Tenn., was one of those who took part in the Limited program, classifying 67 animals in September of 1994. He said he was very pleased with the new options available.

"We've classified for a long time, but if the new programs hadn't come along, there's a very good chance we wouldn't be classifying today," he said. Currently, he is in a partnership operation with his family and milks about 250 Holsteins.

"It's tough to get a lot of cows ready for classifying," Scarlett said. "This is the first time I've been able to relax and enjoy classifying, since the Association's had the new programs."

The Holtzinger family, from New Berlin, Pa., has taken part in the new classification programs as well. Kevin and Karen Holtzinger classified 156 animals in November 1994, utilizing the Classic program. Several Very Good cows were scored at that time.

Kevin noted that with the next classification they may only score a select group of animals.

"We'd like to just do the 2-year-olds next time," he said. "With the Limited program, we can do that." The Limited program allows all

previously unscored cows fresh less than 10 months to be scored.

Some changes were recently made in the new programs.

Participants in the Breeder's Choice program and for the Non-Area scheduling of any program are no longer required to contract for a future classification. Enrollment eligibility for these choices is now based solely on past participation.

To be eligible, breeders must have participated in a qualifying program within the past 14 months.

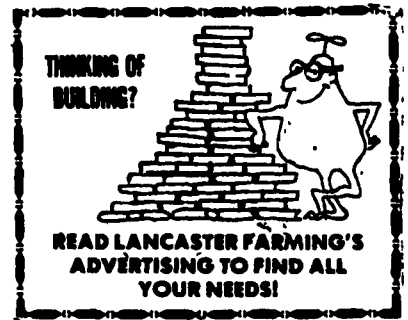
For producers who have not classified any animals in the past five years, the Introductory program is available. (Participation in a SET does not affect eligibility for this program.) This is a special program for producers who have not been classifying regularly, and will provide them with extra bene-

fits in getting started.

First and second lactation cows fresh less than 10 months are the only cows required to be presented in the Introductory program. Optional cows not presented in this program will be excused from future classifications if the producer wishes.

The Association's Board of Directors has also approved the addition of a Junior classification program. This will allow Junior members to have their animals classified even if their parents choose not to participate. The rules for this program have been developed, and the program will be implemented later this year.

Producers with questions about the new classification program can call the Holstein Association's Member Services Unit at 1-800-952-5200.



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