



Penn State Cooperative Extension
Capitol Region Dairy Team



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'TIS THE SEASON FOR A CHANGE IN MILKING ROUTINE

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It can be tempting to look for a quick fix to lower somatic cell counts. We often try the latest mastitis treatment, teat dip, or vaccine in an attempt to lower a herd's SCC. Sometimes these products work well alone, but often a single product will not result in significant changes in udder health.

There is one "magic" solution for improving milk quality in a herd, and it costs very little — a careful milking procedure.

Why not take a closer look at your milking routine? Small adjustments at milking time can add up to big improvements in udder health, with cows milking out faster and more completely. If you are struggling with milk quality

on your farm, here are some suggestions for changes in your milking routine:

- Treat milking the herd as the most important job on the farm. Set a routine and make certain everyone who milks follows a set procedure. Not everyone is suitable to be milking cows. If you have family members or hired help that strongly dislike milking, find another job for them — they will nearly always cost you money.

- Strip 3-5 squirts of milk from each cow before predipping or washing. The first milk taken from a quarter is usually high in bacteria counts. Forestripping will allow you to find flakes or abnormal milk and check the udder for swelling. In addition, stripping will help cows milk out more quickly by stimulating milk letdown more strongly. Finally, use a strip cup (particularly in tiestalls) so that the milk and bacteria do not contaminate the bedding.

- Predip with a "proven" product. Ask your supplier for evidence of the effectiveness of a teat dip in preventing new infections. Never use "home-brew" dips without labels or ingredient tags. It is important to allow the predip to remain on the teats for 30 seconds before wiping — this allows the dip to work by killing most of the bacteria on the teat end.

- Use a non-siphoning dip cup, not a spray bottle! Although some may disagree with this opinion, it is very difficult to completely cover the teats with a sprayer. Unfortunately, if you do get the teats well covered when using a spray bottle, you will often use more product than necessary. Clean the dip cup between milking times and after infected cows.

- Dry teats completely with individual paper towel or cloth. Tiny drops of water on the teat end can be forced back into the udder by the unit during "squawks" or liner slips — often carrying bacteria and manure with them.

- Attach the milking unit within 1 to 1½ minutes after the cow is first prepped. Oxytocin peaks in the bloodstream several minutes

after a cow is stimulated; peak milk letdown is best achieved through forestripping plus 20-30 seconds of vigorous wiping. Attaching the units in 1 to 1½ minutes after prepping will cause cows to milk out faster, and the amount of milk harvested may be increased by 5 percent or more per cow. In a tiestall barn, it is common for cows to be prepped several minutes ahead. Avoid this practice, as it can lower peak milk flow and increase milking time! In parlors, you may need to prep only 2 or 3 cows at a time before attaching the milking units.

- Don't "overmilk" cows. Attaching a milker to a cow who has not let down her milk can cause overmilking as easily as leaving the unit on too long. The result is often teat end damage, making the cow's udder more easily infected by bacteria. Inspect teat ends for problems regularly. Check that automatic takeoffs are set properly, and monitor the vacuum level regularly on the system.

- Post-dip teats immediately after the cow is finished. Cover the entire teat with post-dip, because this prevents bacteria from feeding and multiplying on the milk film remaining on the teat end. Encourage cows to stand for 30 minutes before lying down, which will allow teat ends to close. Post milking teat dipping can reduce the incidence of environmental mastitis by more than 50 percent and is one of the most effective mastitis controls available.

- Milk infected cows last. This will prevent the spread of contagious organisms such as Staph aureus via the milking equipment or your hands to clean cows in the herd.

- During severely freezing or windy weather, don't stop dipping your cows! Before turning cows outside at 20 degrees Fahrenheit or below, post-dip cows and wait one or two minutes before wiping excess product off the teats. Avoid using salves or udder creams when cows are exposed to freezing conditions.

York/Adams 4-H's Win National Dairy Judging Contest

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Team members from the York County 4-H Dairy Judging Team joined forces with one Adams County dairy judging member to take first place in the dairy judging contest at the recent North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville Ky.

Winning team members included Trisha Knight, Airville, York County; Michael Bosley, Glenville, York County; Cory Thompson, Wellsville, York County; and Clayton Wood, Littlestown, Adams County. Paul Knight and Jeff Rutz, both of Airville, coached the team.

The team, representing Pennsylvania, competed against twenty-one 4-H and FFA teams from

across the country. Members judged 10 classes and gave oral reasons on three cow classes.

The Pennsylvania team placed first in the Ayrshire and Jersey breeds, second in the Guernsey and Brown Swiss breeds, and 12th in Holstein judging. The team took fourth place in oral reasons.

Individually, Clayton Wood from Adams County placed first in the overall contest, first in Jersey judging and fourth in Brown Swiss. Cory Thompson from York County placed fifth in the Ayrshire breed, and eighth overall. Michael Bosley placed 13th overall, and Trisha Knight placed 17th overall out of 84 individuals.

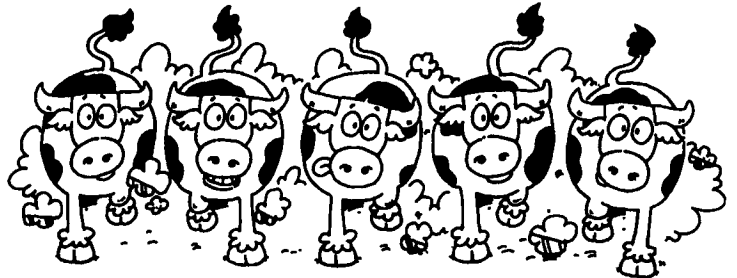
Two Holstein Internships Available

BRATTLEBORO, Vt. — Holstein Association USA, Inc., and Holstein Foundation, Inc., offer two summer internships in their Brattleboro, Vt. headquarters office. Both internships offer competitive compensation while providing valuable dairy industry experience.

Internships in marketing communications and youth

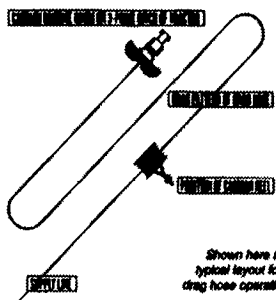
programs/education are available for summer 2004.

Application deadline for both internships is Dec. 1, 2003. To learn more about the internship programs or to apply, contact Ben Church, manager of communications, at (800) 952-5200 ext. 4174, or Kelli Dunklee, youth programs specialist, (800) 952-5200 ext. 4124.



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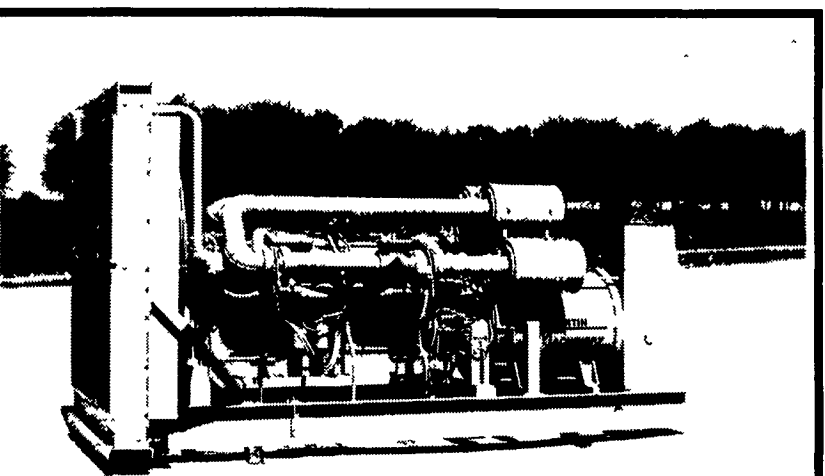
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