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## Notes on Milking Equipment

Dairy Newsletter  
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Milking equipment is a critical area to maintain on every dairy farm, after all this is how the milk we work so hard to get is harvested! Last week I spent a few days learning about the equipment and why it is important to do regular checkups and maintenance and here are some of the main points:

- There are many contributors to mastitis; 20% of which is related to the milking machine, and 30% is related to milking management/routine. The remainder is 20% the cow and 30% herd and farm management.
- A good indicator that the equipment needs some improvement is the teats! By scoring the teats you can have an idea of how quick and gentle the milking process is. For example; too many raised rings on teat ends, swelling on teat ends after milking, and discoloured teats after milking are all indications that the milking process is not an enjoyable experience for the cow.
- There are many different types of milking liners in the marketplace, and many of them can function well! However, it is critical the milking equipment is set to work with the liners you are using – if it is mismatched you will see more cows with slow milk outs and sore teats.
- Slugging in the line during milking is not ideal – it means more milk will end up against the teat ends which increased the risk for contagious mastitis. To look for slugging in the line watch the receiver jar – the milk should be coming in steadily and not in big splashes.
- Foaming at the receiver jar is also a bad thing – this means there is air in the line which will decrease vacuum at the teat ends and slow down milking.
- Unit on time is also important for teat health; if the unit is on too long this causes more trauma and will increase the risk of mastitis. The unit may be on too long as a result of

- poor stimulation in the prep routine (leading to slow milk out times), long take of settings, or improper milking equipment settings.
- Dry teats and cracking are not necessarily related to the equipment but are a common occurrence in dry winter weather. However, the post milking teat dip can help with this problem. Choose a dip with a good moisturizer (lanolin in the ingredient list is great) to help hydrate teats, these dips are more expensive but may be worth the money to avoid damaged teats.

Overall there are many factors that come into play when milking your cows and eliminating the equipment as a cause for concern is important. Every dairy farm will have an annual milking equipment service, but this often is not at milking time. Having milk flow rates and vacuums measured at milking can provide valuable information. If you have seen abnormal teats, increased somatic cell count, or increased mastitis in your herd you may benefit from a milking time equipment evaluation. Dr. Phil Meadows would be happy to have a chat with you about coming to your farm at milking if you are interested.

Have a good month,

Rachel Poppe