

## PRODUCING QUALITY MILK ON OUR FARMS

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Some years back when I started dairy farming, I think I was too involved with trying to get started, pay my bills and to get some production to really care very much about quality except that we stayed within the legal bounds of quality.

As time went by, and there became a surplus of milk in our market, I began to recognize the fact that the handlers, or bottling plants appreciated the better quality producers with a consistently low bacteria, good flavor, low sediment and normal fat test for the market. It was about this time that I started to try to produce milk that we could be proud of.

I guess I was like one of two country boys at the county fair. They approached a stall containing a shooting gallery with a row of little colored balls bobbing up and down on a stream of water jets. One of the boys took the gun and tried his luck. He tried and tried several times without hitting the first little colored ball. Finally the other fellow took the gun, laid down his quarter and dropped all the balls with one shot. The first boy said, "Wow, I have never seen anything like that, How did you hit all the balls in one shot?" "Easy," said the second boy, "I just took a pot shot at the guy working the water pump and scared the daylights out of him."

I feel that producing high quality milk is kinda like this. You have to hit all the possibilities to maintain a good product. If you have clean healthy cows, clean equipment, and good refrigeration you should have a product you can be proud of.

We, at our farms try to build team work on the part of all the people connected with producing our milk because we feel it takes team effort to maintain a high quality milk.

Sometime back I had an employee to ask me why we should go to the extra bother to try to maintain good or high quality production because as he said you do not get paid any more for your milk as long as it is legal. His attitude was one of just getting by and after using as much patience in explaining to him the benefits of being proud of a good product, he still kept his old attitude and I suggested he look for another job somewhere else.

We try to blend all of the information, knowledge, know how, and common sense we can into maintaining our quality. We use our Coop's quality control program to evaluate what we are doing. Our Coop Lab samples all loads of milk we send in. We get a weekly report showing bacteria count, leucocytes, coli, antibiotic pos. or neg., butterfat and etc. I post these reports so all employees can see them and sometime give them an explanation of the reports. Brag on the report if its good — or tell them what we must do to improve any one aspect of the quality.

I find the attitude of our employees toward the milk inspectors to be an important factor. We as dairymen and our employees need to remember that these men, "The Milk Inspectors" may not always agree with us, but that they are "The Inspectors" and are charged with the enforcement of the Milk code and protection of the consumer.

I know of one instance, when one of a dairymen's employees wanted to be a little funny with an Inspector when the talk first started about leucocytes. The inspector was trying very seriously to explain to this man what a leucocyte was and how to look for one. The employee replied that he saw some running across the pasture that morning. The inspector drew back and said "Where?" The employee pointed his finger toward some of those white African Cattle birds you now see so often in cattle pastures. The Inspector just dropped his head, turned, and walked out.

Several years ago, we set out to improve our production per cow by improving our over all herd health. We use a vaccination program for the virus complex disease, routinely worm and fluke our cows as we dry them off, use teat dip on a routine basis, proper milking procedures, pre-strip, isolate any cows that are unhealthy and keep them isolated till we consider them well. If we do not get a response to mastitis treatment, we slaughter the animal. We use a dry cow treatment for all cows as we dry them off. We have a vet who we consult with on our herd health program and helps us set up our program, but we at the farm must carry it out.

We use the services of the feed companies and Extension Service to try to maintain good nutrition because I feel good herd health begins with proper nutrition, not just economical production. We use the manufacturers representatives of the various soap and chemical companies to outline and carry out our clean up program. We also use manufacture representatives to check out our milking system to be sure it is maintained in proper operation.

I feel we have at our disposal the knowledge and know how from the many people who are involved and interested in dairyman's well being, that if we use this information we can produce a good high quality product.

The most important aspect of it all though is to have people working with you who have a desire to produce a product that we all can be proud of.

I feel that, as far as telling anyone how to control quality is a tough assignment. It is to me, kinda like one of the students here at the University who sat in a class under a professor that always tried to teach the importance of honesty. He required each of them to give a pledge that they had neither given or received any help on their final examination. As the papers were turned in, the teacher noted one in particular. On it was written this pledge, "I ain't had no help on this exam and God knows I couldnt' give any."

I feel this way about this talk, because the problems we are dealing with are very complex and the best of us will make mistakes and occasionally have a quality problem — The important thing is to DO SOMETHING TO CORRECT IT.