

## MILKING MANAGEMENT FOR MAXIMUM PROFIT

by Aubrey Wisdom  
Ross-Holm Automated Milking Systems  
Petaluma, Calif.

The cow is an affectionate, intelligent animal, doing her best to cooperate, sometimes under the most difficult conditions.

She can be trained through habit to do a variety of things; but if we want the maximum from her, we must accommodate her likes and dislikes with the least compromise. If we give her half a chance, she will likely pay us better than any other activity.

Observation of milk cows shows some definite likes and dislikes:

1. SHE WOULD ALWAYS PREFER to stand or eat with her head uphill. In fields note how cows standing or lying almost invariably lie with their head uphill.
2. SHE DOESN'T LIKE TO turn or back up — would prefer to walk straight ahead. A cow alongside the road is much more of a hazard when facing into the road than parallel to or facing away.
3. IN MOVING A GROUP of cows, they would prefer to follow their sisters or lead cow, usually behind one another. It's difficult and requires training to split off small groups.
4. SHE REACTS WELL TO quiet-controlled areas, and continual step-by-step movement.
5. IN A GROUP OF COWS, like other animal groups, a pecking order must be established, and certain cows are established as "boss." Cows are disturbed each time this has to be re-established.
6. COWS ARE HESITANT to go from light to dark.

The less we compromise with a cow's nature, the lower the stress factor.

Management is often hampered by obsolete facilities, worn-out or inefficient milking stables that induce stress and prevent the dairyman from attaining results.

The dairyman must adhere to a strict routine for best results in the preparation, stimulation and milking of the cow — same time, same method, same person as much as possible.

Since no two cows are identical, each animal should be handled as an individual. A modern system should accept reasonable variables, providing production is at profitable levels.

First we must have a man — either owner or manager — with the proper cow know-how and the desire to do a good job of handling, feeding, breeding and housing cows and to respect cows enough to insist they are handled gently, carefully and kindly. Every effort toward greater comfort and well-being of this animal will pay off handsomely in more milk, higher profits and less udder trouble and disease.

The preparation and stimulation of the udder is important to save milking time, get more milk, and reduce teat and udder irritation: Follow a routine that the cows can expect at each milking. Handle them gently so they will associate milking with a pleasant experience.

1. SET UP A SITUATION so cows will want to enter parlor. Design a holding pen of reasonable size, with a positive slope to the rear, and no wall between the holding pen and milking area. Cows will face in and be better prepared to move in.

2. CLEAN THE UDDER with cool water. Under difficult conditions, a detergent should be added.

3. PREPARE FOR LET-DOWN by spraying the udder with warm water and feeding a small amount of high concentrate feed. Let-down is a mental or psychological reaction to some signal (environment, hot water, music, etc.), causing a hormone release through the blood stream, in turn causing contraction of the alveoli or milk-producing cells, expelling the milk into the teat cistern. If this doesn't occur, all the milk cannot be taken from the udder. Milking machine attachment before let-down may cause udder injury. Incomplete harvest or holdup causes premature drying up and low production.

4. USE STRIP CUP. Inspect udder for abnormalities.

5. ATTACH MILKING MACHINE after let-down. It's important that this be at least one minute and not more than three minutes from time of let-down procedure. Attach gently. The time interval and routine should be kept consistent.

6. FEED ACCORDING TO PRODUCTION, with feed available during entire milking. Even in the limited time the cows are in the parlor, significant savings may be made in grain without lowering production. Grain consumption is no longer at the mercy of the cow's appetite.

7. REMOVE THE MILKING MACHINE in an average of 2 1/2 to 5 minutes. Dip teats in bactericide solution prior to leaving. Undivided attention should be given to the milking procedure.

Note: There may be exceptions to the 2 1/2 to 5 minute average, with slow milking cows. However, if average time is excessive, milking practices or equipment may need to be improved.

8. GUIDE THE COW from the parlor. She will probably leave without coaxing if feed is taken away from her.

Since it is important the man give his undivided attention to the milking operation, there is very little question that one man should be in each milking area without outside influence or other people to talk to or "visit" at the expense of the milking routine.