



VETERINARY EDUCATION TRANSFER SERVICES LTD

Working with Dairy Cows Courses
Staff Training, Resources, Seminars, Investigations.
With Neil Chesterton BVSc.

www.lowstressdairy.nz www.lamecow.co.nz



Herringbone Milking Platforms

Farm Policy - "Milking is an exercise in contentment"*

On our farm

Every milking will be calm with a consistent routine for people and the cows.

Operating Procedure

1. **Gathering cows for milking** – call cows "come on girls"
 - Allow cows to drift to the collecting yard
 - Keep 5 metres behind the last cow, don't stand in the blind spot.
2. **Milking yard** – Ensure there is enough space for the size of the herd before closing the entry gate (1.3 sq. m /Jersey (400kg), 1.5 sq. m/Friesian (550kg), 1.8- 2 sq. m/Holstein Friesian (650 – 750kg)).
3. **Start milking** as the first cows arrive if possible.
4. **Backing gate** –
 - Don't move the gate for at least 20 minutes or until three rows have been milked to ensure enough space in the yard for the herd to rearrange into a milking order.
 - Move the gate little (maximum of one metre) and often **to take up the space in the yard** and to keep cows flowing into the bails.
 - Backing gate must never be used to push cows.
 - Gate speed maximum of 12m/min in round yards, 6m/min in rectangular yards.
 - The ideal gate control is a button and a timer so that the gate moves forward a maximum of 1m per activation or ½ m in rectangular yards.
5. **Top gate** -
 - Maximum speed the same as the backing gate.
 - All staff must operate the gate with exactly the same method because cows are animals of routine. One example is the "5-cupping method", where five cows are cupped between each action of the gate (after lifting the chains, moving the gate back, dropping the chains, moving the gate forward) .
 - **The top gate must never be used to push cows (even if not powered).**
6. **Stay in the pit** -
 - All milkers work from front of pit.
 - Call the cows into the bail.
 - Milkers should only enter the yard when really necessary, for example for the last row or two..
 - Use "low-stress handling" techniques if entering the yard (flight distance and balance points).

7. **Filling the bails –**

- Encourage the cows to move to the front bails **by walking against the flow**, talking to the cows.
- Don't tap pipework, poke cows, whistle or shout to push cows up the bails.

8. **Udder preparation –**

If the cows teats are:

- a) Clean and dry - go ahead and cup
- b) Dry but dirty - wipe first then cup
- c) Wet and dirty - wash and dry then cup

9. **Cluster changing**

- Always start cupping from the exit end of the pit
- Start cupping as soon as the first 4 cows are rowed up. This gives more time for the rest of the cows to row themselves up. ***Aim – once the first cow is position she should be cupped within 30 seconds.***
- **One milker** milks in batches of 4-5, teat spray as you go.
- **Two milkers**:- “leap frog” past each other, milking in batches of 4-5, teat spray as you go.

10. **Feeding** – ensure bail feeders are pulled as soon as cows are in position to give them time to eat. The ideal is to have bail feeders that drop feed to five - ten bails at a time to encourage the cows to come to the front.

11. **Milking behavior** – keep milking calm and relaxed – **no whistling, no shouting, no poking or hitting cows or pipework.**

12. **Teat spraying** – cows teats are sprayed after every milking. Spray to cover all surfaces of all the teats.

13. **Opening the head gate –**

- The gate should be opened as soon as possible to give the cows time to exit and the next row to enter.
- Aim to open the gate once 50-75% of clusters have been changed.
- **Be brave, live dangerously!**

14. **Hosing down during milking.** Keep the bail area clean during milking. Hose down on the side where the cups are on, not in front of the cows as they enter.

15. **The milking plant –**

- Listen and watch the plant throughout milking to make sure it is working properly.
- Keep radio volume low. It is best to have no radio if there is disagreement between milkers on which station to listen to.