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ON THE DAIRY FARM

Contributed by OFFICERS OF THE DAIRY DIVISION

Cleansers for the Milking Machine

With the opening of the flush season dairy farmers should make sure milking machines are working at maximum efficiency. Machines not working efficiently can cause production losses and damage to cows as well as wasting farmers' time.

One important aspect of machine efficiency which is often overlooked is the use of the correct cleanser for the farm's particular water supply. Compatibility between cleanser and water supply is of paramount importance in determining the efficiency of the cleanser.

Where the quality of the cleansing water is doubtful it may be worth providing a rain water supply, to be retained for machine and utensil cleansing. It is better to spend money on providing such a supply (installing it is the first and last expense) than to invest in a treatment plant to soften the hard water used in the shed.

The quantity of rainwater which must be stored is not great. An allowance of 2½ gallons a head a day would be sufficient. This would be equivalent to 75 gallons a day for a 30-cow herd, and storage would have to be great enough to last through the four summer months. This means that a total storage of 5,000 to 7,500 gallons would be plenty for a herd of this size.

A good cleanser removes fat from the surface of rubber and utensils, and retards the formation of milkstone and mineral stone. It should be cheap and fairly simple, and it must be effective. The cleanser is usually a mixture of a variety of substances arranged to give the desired properties for the water used. It must be alkaline, to help remove fat and casein deposits, and should contain a wetting agent to enable it to penetrate all parts of the equipment, particularly any fine cracks. A detergent action emulsifies the fat, and helps remove all types of dirt. Slight frothiness improves the scrubbing action and helps carry away dirt from the milk lines, but excess froth makes rinsing difficult. Good rinsing ability is important to ensure that metal surfaces are left in the ideal clean and shiny state.
Besides having all these properties the cleanser should be non-corrosive, so that damage to tinned surfaces, and to the skin of the dairyman, is avoided.

These requirements are not easy to fulfil satisfactorily, particularly when the quality of the water used varies from farm to farm.

It is hard to tell whether the cleanser is working properly, and sometimes ineffectiveness of the cleanser only shows up in results over a few months, for example, through the accumulation of milkstone. If there is any doubt about the efficiency of the cleanser you are using, contact your district officer.

Commercial cleansers are on the market to suit some difficult supplies, and until it becomes possible to recommend particular cleansers for specific troublesome water supplies, it may be worth testing one or more of those available in your shed. Unfortunately, this is still a matter of trial and error.

Catch Mastitis Early To Avoid Losses

Mastitis is an ever-present menace to production, and should be watched for at all times. But it is particularly important to recognise its incidence at an early stage in lactation if a big production loss is to be avoided.

In the milking shed one of the oldest and simplest yet, paradoxically, least used aids to detection of mastitis is the strip cup. Every dairyfarmer should make a practice of using the strip cup on each cow at each milking, regardless of whether mastitis is suspected or not.

The best weapon against mastitis is still prevention by rearing replacements on the farm rather than purchasing them. This is much sounder than resorting to antibiotic therapy.

If it does become necessary to use antibiotics extreme care must be exercised in their administration to ensure that only the correct dosage is given and to keep the antibiotics out of the milk supply. Serious problems affecting quality have arisen in dairy industries throughout the world because of residual antibiotic in milk sent to treatment plants. In many places strict regulations are in force to prevent the supply of milk containing traces of antibiotics.

Once a cow has been treated with antibiotics she should not be milked for supply to the treatment plant until 72 hours after the last administration.

Having Trouble With Your Calves?

Now is the time to put the spotlight on your calf feeding practices.

Have you lost any calves so far? Have you some now that are scouring badly, developing pot-bellies, looking listless, developing a rough coat? If so, then somewhere along the line your calf rearing practises are probably at fault, and it may pay dividends to take a critical look at each stage and make any necessary changes. If you save one calf it will more than pay for the effort expended.

To start from the beginning:

Were your cows in the months prior to calving on an adequate diet, sufficient in all respects to produce a healthy calf, and at the same time stand a full lactation?

Did you make sure that the newborn calf received the colostrum for at least the first six days of life? Was the eventual change to skim or milk substitutes a gradual one?
At any stage was there any over-feeding, resulting in a digestive upset?
What about feeding premises and feeding utensils, would they stand a good scrutiny? Are all calves in one paddock constantly so that droppings continually foul the pasture? Is there any chance of arranging some form of paddock rotation for them?
Housing—or some form of protection during winter months: Is it of the fixed variety that quickly gets fouled-up, or is it able to be towed to a new site every few days?
Are tails flicking constantly, is there much licking and scratching? A closer inspection may reveal the presence of that common parasite—the louse, another enemy to health.
Finally, have you heard any persistent and troublesome coughs lately among the calves? If so, the chances are that there's a worm or two around somewhere, especially if you haven't been able to practice the rotation just mentioned.
If then, on checking through, you find a weakness somewhere in your methods, do not hesitate to seek the advice of the local Field Officer, or write for bulletins on the subject: scours and probable mortality can be avoided.

Keep Your Pigs Warm This Winter

Although pigs are largely a sideline to the major dairying enterprises, they can be a profitable sideline if reasonably well kept.

Pig raisers are not always fully aware of the adverse effects that cold and wet winter conditions have on their stock, in particular young pigs farrowed in the early winter months in time to utilise surplus skim milk.
It is not uncommon to see pigs housed in poorly constructed shelters with only bare earth floors, and sides and roof which permit the entrance of draughts and moisture. Over a period of six to seven months when the cold weather does not allow the surroundings to warm up to any large extent the poorly housed pig suffers the discomforts of these conditions and is unable to utilise its food to the full for the required purpose—to put on weight at a steady and even rate. Much of the food taken in is needed to maintain the body functions at a high level to combat the effects of the cold and wet conditions, and less is available to go into maintaining the growth rate at a satisfactory level.
Under such conditions of discomfort, pigs also become more susceptible to disease. Virus pneumonia resistance in particular is appreciably lowered when pigs are housed under cold and wet conditions, and this disease in itself lowers growth efficiency by about 15 per cent.
Young pigs in their first week or two of life are, of course, the most susceptible to cold, and chilling accounts for a high proportion of deaths at this stage.
The sideline pig house need not be elaborate, but should be reasonably well constructed. It should have good concrete floors to stop moisture coming up from below, and walls of close weatherboard or other material which will keep the draught and moisture out. The roof must be rainproof. The house should be designed so that there is some air circulation, and moisture does not condense on the inside of the roof.
Best site for the house is on a sloping area so that there is good drainage away from it, and moisture does not collect nearby.
Radiant heaters in the house are a good investment for keeping piglets warm in the critical early days of their life.
In fairness to your pigs, give some thought to keeping them free from the hazards of a cold, wet winter. Extra efforts made to provide comfort and warmth will be repaid handsomely through increased feed efficiency and growth rate, and may get the pigs away to market just that little bit earlier.
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