Milk Pounds Per Cow Daily	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Cows Needed To Milk Each Hour Per Person	34	31	28	26	24	22	21

By increasing daily production and improving cow flow, labor cost per 100 lbs of milk can be reduced by as much as 50% or more. The chart below shows what labor cost does when pounds per person per hour increases. This is based on $6.00 per hour labor cost.

Pounds of Hourly Production Per Person								
400	500	600	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200
Labor Cost Per CWT Milk At $6.00/ Hour Labor								
$1.50	1.20	1.00	.86	.75	.67	.60	.55	.50

Parlor efficiency can reduce labor cost per 100 lbs of milk by as much or more than $1.00 per cwt. We suggest the following ideas for maximum efficiency.

Production

Stay on a good nutrition program and monitor it monthly.

Cow Flow

Holding pen gates, easy entrance ramps, center parlor rear door for access to holding pen, detatchers, easy straight out exits, one person for every 8 units or more, regular milking equipment function evaluation. Other things to consider include clean udders which mean singed udders and docked tails, automated post dip sprays, low line or rapid empty weigh jars, and in large herds group all slow milking cows in the same group.

Taking the Backwork Out of Vet Work

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Having been in large animal practice for over twenty years I have out of necessity had to find ways to protect my back. If your back looks like mine the best method is to hire a young ambitious associate. Short of that we have found some ways to ease the burden on our backs.

Whatcom county dairies are primarily confinement freestall operations. We see considerable foot problems related to high energy diets, lack of exercise, and continual confinement on concrete. We designed a portable foot chute that has reduced the labor in handling lame cows. It is simply a head catch with a bellyband and adjustable stirrups for the feet. This has proven to be a very popular piece of equipment with our clients and they now request we bring the foot chute when coming out for lame cows. Many days the problem we run into is coordinating the requests for the chute.

We recently built a new facility with a simple area under cover for handling cattle. Two features in particular have helped relieve the stress and strain on our backs. The first is a surgery pit. We do our displaced abomasal surgery down with a ventral right paramedian incision. We use overhead chain hoists to roll the cow up. The pit allows us to stand during surgery. We also have a set of corrals and head catch which allows us to process cattle whether it be sick cow work or routine vaccinations and dehorns with a minimal of labor. Our technicians are trained to assist and drop cows for surgery and are very good at moving cattle through the head catch. Our haul in practice has increased monthly. We are no longer processing cattle at the end of a rope because the owner doesn't have decent facilities.

The surgery pit is positioned 36 inches from the wall is 30 inches wide and 6½ feet long. It is 20 to 22 inches deep sloped to a drain at one end. One step was incorporated to ease entry. We cover it with reinforced marine plywood when not in use. If doing this over we would make the pit 4 to 5 inches deeper.

We have found that providing good unloading docks encourages farmers to bring animals in. We have a high ramp for trucks and a low ramp for trailers. The corrals consist of three 12 by 12 pens divided by moveable gates, and two 6 foot gates opening into the 32 inch alleys that run on either side allowing us to move cattle in a circle. The fencing is 6 feet high with 5 rails. We have had no problems with animals trying to jump or escape this fencing. The whole area can be hosed down and cleaned with a pressure wash down hose.

Developing a similar set up will allow you to process cattle in a clean environment, with a minimum of labor, stress and strain on you back, and is appreciated by the client.