

stanchion barns. The water bowls function much like pig drinking fountains and it is easy for the pipes themselves to get contaminated with various bacteria. Chlorinating the water supply on the farm will improve intake because it reduces the amount of bacteria present in pipes, fountains, water bowls and large tanks. There are commercial dry pellet chlorinators available for under \$800 that can be at-

tached to the well to chlorinate the water supply for the entire farm. In addition I have many dairy farmers that routinely chlorinate the water tanks, water bowls, and water fountains on their dairies on a weekly basis to keep the bacterial growth to a minimum in their water supply. Household bleach is used at 2-3 oz. per 50 gallons of water capacity.

Mastitis Control Without A Slap In The Face

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The importance of quality milk has been known by our profession for years. As dairy farmers work to improve their milk quality, the level of environmental mastitis appears to be going up as somatic cell counts go down. As our producers do a better job, the contagious bacteria are under control and the only bacteria left are the environmental.

Many new procedures have been introduced to the dairy industry to help dairy farmers reduce the level of environmental mastitis. Things such as predipping, not using water, clipping udders, keeping stalls clean and dry, lot and pasture management, vaccines and nutrition have all been introduced to dairy farmers to help them control environmental mastitis.

No matter what the situation is, the key to environmental mastitis control is to milk clean, dry and well stimulated teats. Even though many dairy farmers practice this daily, they still get the occasional slap in the face.

The cow's tail continues to be a cause of dirty cows. The tail lies in the manure and urine and then swings around covering the cow's body and the entire barn. The tail tends to provide food for flies throughout the dairy facility.

In efforts to fine tune mastitis control even further, the vast majority of my dairy farmers have docked the tails on their dairy cows. By eliminating the tail, the farmers have seen less flies, cleaner cows, and less environmental mastitis. I have yet to have a single farmer that has started docking tails quit.

Tail docking is not for every farm and is something each individual farm must decide on. The procedure is painless and is no more negative to the animals than dehorning or castration. Tail docking is just another procedure that can be used to help keep the cows clean, dry and comfortable.

Tail docking is done by placing an elastator band on the tail 8 to 10 inches below the lower tip of the vulva. The band is placed on the tail and the tail will slowly fall off over the next two to four weeks. I have seen herds produc-

ing over 23,000 pounds dock the entire milking herd and saw no drop in production. In a high producing herd such as this, I can guarantee if the procedure is stressful, production is the first thing to drop. Some veterinarians are using surgical removal of tails rather than banding. It really doesn't matter what procedure you use as long as it is done properly and as humanely as possible.

If the tails are docked too short, there can be an increase in vaginitis because the tail stub gets into the vulva causing irritation. If the tails are docked too long, the stub can knock the farmer unconscious! The rule of thumb is to dock the tail two hand widths (8-10 inches) below the tip of the vulva. In areas where tetanus is a problem, I recommend injecting the animals with two doses of vaccine two weeks prior to the day of tail banding. Even though the incidence of tetanus is low (less 0.5%), you still may want to eliminate this risk.

The majority of my dairy farmers dock the tails on the heifers when they come into the steam up group two weeks before calving. To start out the herds, they dock the entire milking herd at the same time. The reason most of my dairy clients do not dock tails on calves is because there is too much variation in tail length. The farmers have found more consistent tail length by docking springing heifers.

Even though there are some people that are against tail docking, I have found this procedure to be very beneficial to the dairy farmer's profitability. This is a procedure that must be properly discussed with each farmer and let them decide whether it will work for them or not. I have found many of the good farmers are docking tails regardless of how their local area feels about it. They realize the value of having clean, dry and comfortable cows. The other benefit that is often overlooked is a better attitude of the dairy farmer. When farmers no longer are slapped in the face with a dirty tail and their herds produce higher quality milk, their attitude is positive. Positive attitudes breed success.