

Common mistakes during milking

Although the main methods for controlling mastitis have long been known, we regularly encounter certain protocol errors in the milking parlor, which promotes the spread of mastitis. In this series of articles, we present the 3 most common errors found in Western European dairy farms.

Not wearing gloves

Nowadays, a large majority of farmers still do not wear gloves during milking, which is justified by a loss of sensitivity and comfort. As an alternative, they claim to wash their hands before every milking ...

However, wearing a new pair of gloves with each milking is an essential measure to combat infectious bacteria (see related article: infectious bacteria) that can multiply on the skin of cows, but also on the farmer. There is a considerable risk for the farmer to infect a healthy cow with his hands after milking an infected cow. The gloves then prevent contagious bacteria from surviving (plastic).



Good hand cleaning before milking removes dirt and organic matter from the skin. As a result, mainly the bacteria in the environment that multiply in the dirt can be controlled (see related article: environmental bacteria). This protocol has only a limited effect on the control of infectious bacteria if it is not associated with routine disinfection of the skin after each infected animal. Wearing gloves is the safest and most effective way to combat both types of bacteria.

TIP: farmers must use a new pair of gloves at each milking, otherwise the gloves will become contaminated and pose a risk to the animals.

No premilking

Pre-milking = removal of residual milk from the milk channel before each milking (2/3 teats).

For many farmers, the premarketing of each animal and each milking is a waste of time. They prefer to wait until they see lumps (signs of clinical mastitis) in the filter before they preal to identify diseased animals. Others milk only once or twice with the risk of disturbing the routine of the cows and thus the oxytocin reflex.



The identification of lumps in the milk filter indicates a poor detection of clinical mastitis. This infected milk increases the number of germs in the milk.

Therefore, it is extremely important to pay attention to the three main advantages of pre-milking.

- A) Early detection of evidence of clinical mastitis to treat it as soon as possible.
- B) Stimulate the cow and activate the oxytocin reflex, which stimulates good milk delivery.
- C) Remove the first infected rays (residual milk) to avoid infection of the tank and the milking system.

Do not apply pre-soak

The use of disinfectants after milking is a technique adopted by a large majority of farmers. However, before milking, they are sometimes content to wipe the teats with a paper towel without any associated product. In 2011, in Belgium, 32% did not practice "pre-soaking" before milking (after Theron, L et al., 2011)

Not using a "pre-soak" product before milking was understandable 30 years ago, when contagious bacteria were the main cause of mastitis in the farm. However, today, it must be admitted that it is the environmental bacteria that cause the most problems in the world. "Pre-soaking" is then more recommended than ever to control this type of bacteria, as is the fact of favoring "barrier" rather than "spray" dipping products after milking (see related article "contagious bacteria" and "environmental bacteria")

Indeed, applying a "pre-soak" foam before milking will allow, firstly, to detach the organic matter bonded to the skin (cleaning property thanks to surfactants) but also to disinfect the skin colonized by bacteria (thanks to the disinfectant present in the product).

