

He "Clips" Udders With A Propane Torch

A Wisconsin veterinarian has a no-fuss, no-muss - just don't miss - alternative to clipping hair from cow udders. David Reid of Hazel Green uses a propane torch to singe hair off in seconds without even touching the udder.

According to a report by Jane Fyksen in Agri-View newspaper, Reid says just about every dairyman who's tried the idea has become a believer. Reid, whose primary work is as a milk quality consultant to dairymen, milk equipment companies and other vets, says a big part of controlling mastitis is controlling the amount of bacteria reaching teat ends. The best way to keep teats clean of manure and bedding, and to make drying the udder easier, is to remove the hair on and around the teats themselves.

Reid says his torch method is faster, cheaper and more effective than clipping and that cows tolerate it better, too. You don't have to tie them down and they don't get nicked when they start jumping around.

Reid suggests farmers get a plumber's propane torch for \$10 to \$12. The flame nozzle is usually 3/8 to 1/2 in. in dia. Find a No. 45 copper fitting for it and crunch it down so you've got a narrow, even 1/16th to 1/8th in. opening. Then block off the air ports on the torch with aluminum foil so you'll have a cooler, orange flame. The normal hot, blue flame this type of torch produces is too hot. You want a nice orange

flame with just a little blue at the edge where the fire starts out of the nozzle.

Do the job before milking when the udder is full and do it when the hair on the udder is dry. Wave the flame 8 to 16 in. away from the teat. It's best to start farthest away and work your way in. Reid recommends burning off all hair within 6 or 7 in. of the teats. If you do it right, the hair should just disappear without starting on fire. You should wear gloves so if the hair starts on fire you can quickly smother it before it reaches the skin.

A \$3 tank of propane will do about 40 cows. And out of those 40, Reid says only one or two will react at all to the torch. Another benefit, he adds, is that clipping normally doesn't get hair on the teats themselves the way the torch can.

Removing udder hair is one of those "good husbandry" chores that has tended to "go by the wayside as dairy operations have gotten bigger, says Reid. But he notes that 60 percent of herds with somatic cell counts under 120,000 clip udders regularly.

If you're nervous about using a torch, Reid says the next best alternative is to buy a cordless beard trimmer. They're not as noisy as conventional clippers, he maintains, and if a cantankerous cow happens to kick and break it, a new one costs less than a set of blades. A beard trimmer will do 40 to 60 cows before becoming too dull.

"Best Ideas"

Editor's Note: Have you got a "best idea" you'd like to share with FARM SHOW readers? It might be a new wrinkle in cropping, livestock, machinery or whatever. Maybe it's still experimental but looks promising. Or, maybe you've already proven it works. We'd like to hear about it. Write to: Best Ideas, c/o FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.

He Uses Sand To Bed His Cows

Sand wouldn't be too many farmers' first choice for growing crops, but for bedding cows, sand can't be beat, says Steve Hasel.

According to a report by Jane Fyksen, in Agri-View newspaper, the Lake Mills dairyman (along with his dad, Eugene, and brother, Jim) swears by sand in their free stall barn. They've been using it for the cows for 11 years, after first trying it out on heifers. The Hasels milk 150 Holsteins.

Although alleys and curbs are cemented, the stalls are not. The 8 to 15 in. of sand is put over a silty, clay base so moisture can run through. If it's managed right, Hasel says the sand doesn't all have to be removed each time the stalls are cleaned. They add a skid loader bucket full per stall or less every two weeks.

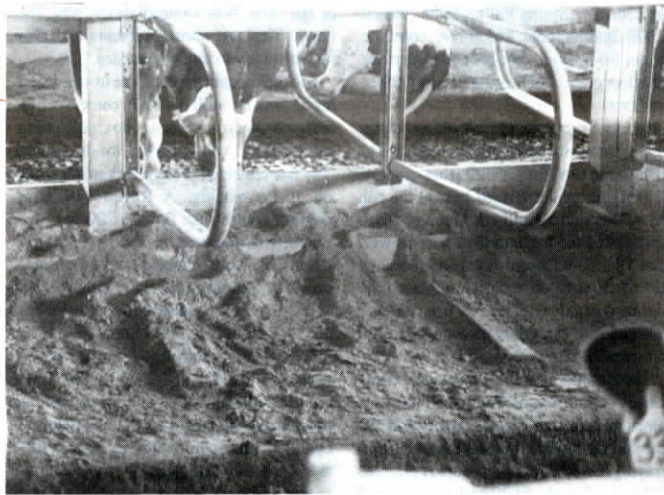
The Hasels use masonry sand because stones in coarser material previously caused abscesses in cows' hooves. They buy sand by the ton from a local contractor for about

\$12.25. They use about 40 tons a month. Hasel says he likes the convenience of it. A phone call and it's delivered the next day or two.

The Hasels say not only are the cows super comfortable, but sand prevents bacteria from growing because it dries so fast. The herd, which averages 21,969 lbs. of milk and 829 lbs. of fat, typically runs a somatic cell count of 120,000.

Hasel says the cows aren't sandy when they come into the parlor, except for the occasional cow that lets down a pool of milk while she's still in the free stall barn.

Manure is scraped from the barn alleys to a manure pit at the end of the barn. Any sand that gets scraped with it settles out at the edge of the pit. "The manure stays very liquid with sand," says Hasel. Manure is pumped from the pit out to the field where it's injected. Hasel says there's not enough sand spread to worry about buildup on fields.



Photos courtesy Hoard's Dairyman

They Use Manure For Bedding

"Manure is a cheap source of bedding and the cows really love it," say Adrian and Dutch Rovers, Chazy, N.Y., who have come up with a method to turn manure into dry, absorbent bedding for their 420-stall free stall barn.

The Rovers use a chain harrow every three days to spread manure evenly on the concrete exercise lots outside their barns. After the manure has dried for one or two days, they use a front-end loader to scrape it into piles, then store it in their commodity shed. When they're ready to bed the stalls, they load the dried manure into a feed mixer truck which drives down the alleys, unloading bedding into the stalls.

"It eliminates the need to buy straw and keeps cows comfortable and clean," says Adrian. "We bed the stalls about once a month. It takes only two hours to bed the entire barn. The final product is gray in

color and very dry and fine in consistency. Our method works better than using a hydraulic extractor to press moisture out of manure because extractors never get the manure completely dry. It takes only about 10 minutes to chain harrow the entire lot. The manure spreads more easily if it's moist. If there are too many solids, you get clumps. If it rains after we've chain harrowed the manure, we just chain harrow it again and let it dry. If we think it's going to rain, we pile the manure up, then spread it out and chain harrow it later. Cows walk across the concrete exercise lots on their way to and from the milking parlor. The lots are sloped to provide for water run-off and faster drying. However, when drying conditions are good, we bring extra manure over every week from our heifer barn and chain harrow it too. We mix lime with the manure as it's loaded into the mixer truck. The lime raises the pH

of the mixture, kills harmful bacteria, and makes the bedding more absorbent. It's also good fertilizer."

The Rovers make their bedding from the first of May to the end of October. When they run out of room in their commodity shed, they store the extra bedding in a vacant bunker silo, covering it with plastic. "Chain-harrowed manure has a small particle size, causing it to pack very tightly," says Adrian.

Manure from the free stalls is scraped into an outdoor pit. Since the manure can't be used again for bedding, it's spread over fields.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Adrian Rovers, Rt. 9, Box 364, Chazy, N.Y. 12921 (ph 518 846-7383).

