Milk Cows 3 Times a Day?

Three times a day milking has boosted milk production a whopping 10 to 40% in herds in different parts of the country.

The system is not for every dairyman, as many have found from a brief trial, but in certain situations it's almost a sure way to fatten the milk check with a minimum of extra investment and expense.

It has been most successful in Wisconsin where herds are relatively small and management is intensive. A good example is on the Valley Beau Farm, operated by Dennis and Douglas Bowe, near Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Doug Bruce

"We've been on three times a day milking for nearly three years," says Doug Bowe, who has the herdsman responsibilities. "In two years, our herd average went from 15,000 lbs. to over 21,000 lbs. of milk, which is a 40% increase. Of course, there are other factors, such as closer culling and more frequent feeding, but the main reason is the extra milking."

The Bowes milk at 3:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., not quite an equal eight-hour interval. Doug Bowe is on hand for every milking and makes up for the short night by sleeping three hours in the morning before the 11:00 a.m. milking. His brother Dennis takes care of some feeding and cleanup, but he is mainly responsible for field work. Another brother, Dan, helps with milking evenings and on weekends.

"Labor makes the difference in this schedule," says Bowe. "You need a good relief milker who you feel comfortable about leaving the milking with."

When cows milk more, they need to eat more. The Bowes feed at 5 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. They estimate that the cows eat 25% more grain and 5% more roughage, but the increased production more than pays for it.

The electric bill is somewhat higher, and the milker inflations wore out faster under a three times a day system, but these are only minor expense increases.

In the first year of three times a day milking, the Bowes showed increases of 6,000 lbs. of milk per cow in the 75-cow herd which yielded about $40,000 extra in the year's milk checks.

An added benefit is better herd health. By more frequent milking, udders are under less stress and there is less mastitis. A high producing cow may stay in the herd a year or two longer.

Dairy scientists do not guarantee the kind of results with three times a day milking that the Bowes are getting. In general, they predict a 15% increase over the traditional twice daily milking.

Larger herds may not go this high. For example, in the 300-cow herd of Ted and Ronald Burt, Corinne, Utah, production went up about 10% when they changed to three times daily milking. Since they hire the milking done, the changed schedule actually fits their employees better.

Uses Old Tires For Fence Posts

Ever thought about using old tires for fence posts? "Works great" says an Oregon livestock producer who has tried the idea.

When Carl Corey, of Yamhill, strung electric fence along one side of a field to keep cattle out, he put up old tires to temporarily support the wire. It worked so well that he left the tires standing instead of putting in steel posts.

He thought the tires wouldn't need insulators, but they partially grounded the current so he fastened insulators to the tires. With insulators, he says, his tire fence worked perfectly for cows.

"When I wanted to move equipment through, I just laid a tire down on its side, drove across, and set the tire up again," Corey explains. "The fence worked good for cows, but when I had the bull in the pasture, he'd sometimes butt the tires down."

New Holland's 707 has up to 26 tons/hr. capacity.

Small Forage Chopper "Saved The Day"

A forage harvester, designed for use in small European fields, has turned out to be a real "insurance policy" unit for many farmers in North America.

The unit, a tractor-mounted, single-row harvester, proved its value in upper New York state and eastern Ontario last fall, according to Larry Fisher, product manager for forage harvesters at Sperry New Holland. Fisher says demand for the machines generated by rain-plagued dairymen, cleaned out the firm's inventory last year. This year's production was upped because of the demand.

Near Holly, New York, dairyman John Kinsey had resorted to slogging through his muddy corn field with a corn knife to cut armfulls of corn for feeding his cows. He and his wife would haul the corn to a truck parked at the edge of the field.

"We didn't want to sell the herd, but we couldn't put up hay because it was so wet all year and we'd planned on a bumper crop of corn silage. But then we couldn't get into the fields to get the corn. We just didn't know what we were going to do," Mrs. Kinsey said. Kinsey decided to try a one-row Model 707 forage harvester offered on a trial basis by his Sperry New Holland dealer. He wasn't optimistic, but when he mounted it on his tractor and started through the field, he found he could harvest corn. Not as quickly as he'd like to, but it provided him with enough corn to keep his herd fed.

Other farmers in the area watched with interest. Many had tried crawlers, dual wheels and tandem hitches to try to get their conventional forage harvester through the fields. Nothing seemed to work. They were elated when they saw Kinsey chugging through his fields, sometimes with two tractors hitched together.

"With the "707", I was able to chug through the mud, cutting one row at a time. I was able to cut enough feed every day for about 55 cows," Kinsey said.

The "707" is designed for use with 40 to 80 horsepower tractors, although many farmers were using the units on much larger machines. Fisher says there were few problems encountered by the over-power.

"We certainly don't recommend more than 80-horsepower tractors, but these people were faced with some pretty serious problems and they were willing to try almost anything to get through the mud," Fisher said.

Under normal conditions the "707" can harvest up to 26 tons of corn silage an hour. It can also be equipped with a windrow pickup. Many farmers who harvest 40 acres or less of corn silage or 30 acres or less of grass silage have found the small unit ideal for their needs.

But with the experience of last year behind him, Fisher says he knows the "707" is being eyed by many larger farmers for handling routine small field harvesting and to be available "just in case" a larger harvester breaks down or can't get into a field.