# Machine milking problems: trouble shooting

**J.D.H.M. Miltenburg, O. C. Sampimon, J. van Vliet & J. Sol**

Animal health Service LTD, Arnsbergstraat 7, 7418 EZ Deventer, The Netherlands  
E-mail: h.miltenburg@gdvdieren.nl

The Animal Health Service in The Netherlands employs certified specialists in the field of mastitis management, especially trained in the evaluation of the functioning of the milking machine and milking procedures. They visit, on a yearly basis, around 300 dairy farms with mastitis or problems related to the milking machine at the request of the farmer and/or local veterinary practitioner. They report their findings always to the farmer and the local veterinarian.

Two important problems related to the milking machine are restless cows during milking and disturbed milk ejection or removal. In this article possible causes of these two problems are discussed.

Cows should be quiet and relaxed during milking (Bruckmaier, 1998; Reneau 1995). It is considered a herd problem if over 10% of the clusters are kicked off or require reattaching. Possible causes and indications of restless cows during milking are (Aneshansley 1992; Mein 2003; Mein 2004; Southwick 1995):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Indications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient functioning</td>
<td>teat affections</td>
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<tr>
<td>of the milking machine</td>
<td>restless cows at the end of milking</td>
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<td>wrong use of concentrates</td>
<td>restless cows when there no concentrates</td>
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<td>fly nuisance</td>
<td>reattaching is no problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>sensitive teats</td>
<td>cows also restless before milking</td>
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<td>stray voltage</td>
<td>cows restless during milking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>teat lesions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cows restless during udder preparation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cows tripping</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cows are kicking quite suddenly</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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cow stalls too small
parlour
restless milker
cows are not eager to come into the milking parlour
cows are not standing straight in the stalls
cows are afraid of the milker

Disturbed milk ejection/removal

Intramammary infections will exist longer if the udder is insufficiently milked out (I.D.F., 1987). The recommended maximum strip yield per udder is 0.5 kg (Mein & Hamann, 1995). The proportion of cows with more than 250 ml of strip yield should not be above 10% (Rasmussen, 2004). Possible causes of disturbed milk ejection/removal are (Bruckmaier, 1998; Reneau 1995):

Causes

- Insufficient functioning of the milking machine
- insufficient udder preparation
- variable milking routine
- cow in bad shape
- cow factors

Examples

- vacuum/pulsation failure, wrong liner design, cracked liners/tubes, wrong position cluster, wrong adjustment automatic cluster removal
- udder prep-lag time too short
- different milkers/milking procedures
- cow not healthy/in heat/stress
- udder shape, teat shape, milking speed

References


