

dps MOOSLETTER

Dairy Performance Solutions Newsletter

July, 2015



Making quality milk is less about magic and more about motivation!

The “Secrets” of Quality Milk

I’m often asked how we managed to produce superior quality milk from the large number of cows that I was involved with during my dairy career. Not to sound flippant, the answer is wrapped up in the question. *We managed*. It is simply a fact that we made milk quality a priority, and we acted like it. But that was not always the case. I was bullied into it.

First and before anyone thinks this article is about extolling how smart, capable or talented I am, nothing could be further from the truth. While this will come as no shock to folks who have known and loved me in spite of myself (God bless you every one) I have at times had a tendency to be somewhat, shall we say, “stoic” in my approach. Okay, I can be hard-headed. But before you “throw out the baby with the wash water”, keep in mind that like many things, that trait is both a blessing and a curse, depending on how it is harnessed.

Secondly, I will tell you that I have managed some of the most interested, dedicated, and engaged people I have ever known. There is no substitute for those particular ingredients in any kind of business. And, if I have learned anything at all in the career I have been blessed with up to this point, it is that those three qualities (interest, dedication, and engagement) cannot be faked for any sustained period of time. Our people really cared, and they showed it every day, round the clock.

Having spent most of my career in the Southeast, like many of my counterparts I was convinced by tradition that there were just certain challenges to milk quality in

“When you decide to quit making excuses and make milk quality a priority, you’ll do something about it. Until you take that first step, I can’t help you...”

-Dr. K. Larry Smith
The Ohio State University



In This Issue

- FEATURE: “The “Secrets” of Quality Milk
- “FEWER Program” offers funding to FL dairymen (Page 2)
- FARM™ Program materials (Page 3)
- News/Links (Page 3)
- Ponderings (Page 4)

the Southeast that were insurmountable... The consequence of location. Higher bacteria counts and certainly higher somatic cell counts. There was just no escaping it. While the milk we produced was wholesome and safe, we were just never to be able to reach those pristine numbers I read about in the industry press. And then one day...

I had flown to New York State to attend a meeting of the [National Mastitis Council](#). For some strange reason, I had been named to their Board of Directors. I felt like a fox in the henhouse. Finally I was in a position to straighten out those misguided folks who were nice enough, but just didn't understand how tough it was to produce milk in the hot, humid Southeastern United States. I'd show them.

As I walked into the convention hall, some guy was making a presentation on milk quality, and just as I sat down, he flashed a picture of a somewhat depraved-looking cow, standing on a small sandy island under a lone palm tree. He jokingly made a reference to Florida milk quality. Everyone laughed. But me. I failed to see the humor. Later I would learn that there were some truths that I was failing to recognize.

At the conclusion of his speech, I made a bee-line to the front of the auditorium. I thrust my business card at him, and immediately took him to task for his remarks. I saw it as a warm-up for the board meeting later that evening.

Quite tired after his presentation, he politely told me that he would love to hear my story, but that if I wanted him to hear it, I'd have to let him buy me a beer. Little did I know that he was about to re-engineer my whole approach to milk quality.

He listened intently as I laid out my case. He sipped on his beer, saying hardly a word as I established all the facts that I was certain one could only understand if they actually lived and worked in the Southeast. Things like, "Our hot, humid environment is conducive to bacterial growth and there is nothing we can do about it." And, "With our high temperatures, somatic cells are going to be higher and there is nothing we can do about it." And, "With our reproductive challenges we have to work with herds that are on the average much higher in "days in milk", and naturally they would have higher cell counts." I knew them all.

When I paused, he said, "Are you through?" with a chuckle. Since I was about out of breath and anxious to hear him wiggle through a response, I nodded.

"If what you say is true, and there is 'nothing you can do about it', then in my humble opinion, you should pick some other kind of farming. The reality is that when you decide to quit making excuses and make milk quality a priority, you'll do something about the problem. Until you take that first step, I can't help you."

I sat there stunned and speechless. The best I could muster was a promise to go back home and look for ways to keep cows clean, dry, cool and comfortable and I would study up on just what somatic cells were and where they came from....

That was twenty years ago, and that guy was no "bully" at all. He's my good friend, Dr. K. Larry Smith, a world-renowned dairy expert with a special interest in milk quality and the entire science of lactation. Since that fateful day when he kicked me in the proverbial pants, I have learned these milk quality "secrets":



FEWER offers funding to FL Producers

Want to reduce your energy costs? Through a program known as [Farm Energy and Water Efficiency Realization \(FEWER\)](#) you can make application for funding to cover 75% of the total project cost of qualifying energy or water saving projects, up to \$25,000 per farm/business.

Funding for the FEWER Program is made available through the [Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services \(FDACS\)](#) and the program is being administered through the [Suwannee County Conservation District \(SCCD\)](#) offices. Additional funding for larger projects may be available through other programs. SCCD is prepared to work through its vendor, [EnSave](#), to help you access additional project funding through USDA and NRCS.

Initial energy audits are AT NO COST to the producer!

Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis with limited funding available. **Call EnSave at (800) 732-1399 or contact your SCCD office at (386) 362-2622, Ext. 3 today!**



FARM Program Information and Resources

Consumers want to purchase food from sources they know will take care of animals, and operate in a way that is consistent with their values and expectations. Dairy farmers have a longstanding commitment to doing what is right. The National Dairy FARM Program: Farmers Assuring Responsible Management™ provides consistency and uniformity to best practices in animal care and quality assurance in the dairy industry.



Certified FARM™ Evaluator

Call today to discuss the program or visit the [FARM™ website](#) to access the program information and excellent tools available to you for becoming an informed member of the FARM™ family!

1. Don't make excuses. Ask "why" or "why not" and seek real answers. Then do something about it.
2. Dairy cows need to be clean, dry, cool and comfortable. Figure it out. Keep in mind that **not** spending the money for those improvements has a cost, too.
3. Somatic cells are an indication of inflammation in the udder. Period. If counts go up, it is because the level of inflammation has gone up. Find the sources and eliminate them.
4. Temperature affects cell counts only if cows have to improvise to make themselves cool. We call them mud holes. And those things we used to call "cooling ponds"? They are mud holes, too.
5. Every cow's "days-in-milk" goes up. Not all have elevated counts. The difference is inflammation in the udder. Get over it and fix it.

Thanks, Dr. K. Larry and NMC. On behalf of thousands of cows in my care since then, and the few folks who will still listen to me these days, we are collectively in your debt. You were right. I was wrong. Boy that feels good!



Dr. K. Larry Smith



A global organization for mastitis control and milk quality

[Learn more about NMC here.](#)

"ATTITUDE"

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, than giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me, and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you, we are in charge of our attitudes."

... Charles Swindoll

Timely Industry News and Information Links

- [Risk Management a Must for Dairy Operations](#)
- [Updated Tools Help Dairy Farmers Select Correct Margin Protection](#)
- [Time to Evaluate How Herd Management Addresses Heat Stress in Cattle](#)
- [Cooled cows make milk](#)

PONDERINGS



What a crazy world we are living in today. I remember hearing my grandfather talk about the state of affairs in the world fifty years ago and distinctly remember him expressing concern for how my generation would ever survive. Pretty heavy stuff for a kid to hear or process. Or so you would think. As vivid as my memory of his sincere concern is, so is my recollection of my diametrically different perspective on the world at the time. It surely wasn't a lack of respect on my part for his thoughts or concern. I just had a different view of the world. A different perspective. And honestly, I silently disagreed with him at the time, and even though I was too young to comprehend what it was that had him so perplexed, I was certain that everything was going to turn out just fine.

Fast-forward thirty years. Now, as if someone found an old Victrola and antique recordings in the attic, those same concerns that once troubled Gran-Gran are suddenly the musings of my own Dad in regard to my own children. This time, my reaction is a bit different. Now I am listening a little more intently, and not being quite so quick to dismiss Dad's concern completely. After all, by that time in my life I had witnessed some ugly things happening in the world, and had been on the receiving end of a few tough things of my own. I still wasn't totally convinced that things were *that* bad.

Tack on another twenty years. Whoa. All of a sudden things are very different. Now I am looking at my own grandchildren growing up, and finding myself having those same kind of thoughts related to their futures. How will they ever survive all that is going on in this crazy, crazy world?

And then I take a little time to study my grandkids a little closer, and I find that they are impacted by my concerns much the same way I was with those of my own Grandfather's when I was their age. They carry on undaunted and unafraid. So, are all of us "old guys" just fretting over nothing? I don't think so.

Now before going any further, keep in mind that I have read "the Book" (as did my father and grandfather) and I already know the ending. So in a macro sense, I am still that unconcerned little boy whose biggest problem was whether to catch crickets or dig worms for bait that particular day. But that does not mean that things are the same today as they have always been. They definitely are not. It seems to me like we are becoming calloused to what is going on around us to the point that nothing seems to shock us anymore. And worse yet, we are more concerned about being "politically correct" than truthful.

Practically everyone in the civilized world today has the same power as the newspaper owners/editors of not so many years ago. EVERYBODY has the full power of the press in their pocket or purse. And as you might guess, sometimes it gets abused.

Take the fact that everyone has a camera (actually a computer with internet access that has a photo application on it) with them 24/7 and then add all the various social media platforms to the mix. In a matter of seconds anyone can capture anything they see, edit it, and send it around the world. Literally. And apparently, anything is fair game. As a result, we have to some degree lost our modesty and decency when it comes to many things, and in my opinion, that is not a real good thing. I was born and raised in a world that had limits. Cross the line, and there were consequences. Today? Well, I am not so sure anymore.

Don't get me wrong, I dabble in the social media world a bit myself. There is little that I can do to offset the fact that our world is fast becoming "paperless". I get that. But really. Some of what you see in social media these days makes you stop and think about how good a job you have done at selecting your "friends". Like everyone else, I see a lot of things in the course of my day,

and not all of it needs to be publicly broadcast. We used to stop and think before we talked and surely before we put things in writing. Not so much anymore it seems.

Which brings me to the real point and that is that primarily due to social media platforms and their use (or abuse), our culture is literally rewriting the definitions for many things. One could write a book on the subject of things that have been "redefined" in the past couple of months alone. I am not about to venture into water that deep in the small space I have here. But I will say this.

Because others change their "definition" does not necessarily mean that I have to change mine. Nor do you.

Social media has taken control of our lives and is changing the way we act and interact. And the trend cuts deeply in both good and bad ways. We need to be careful not take everything we read in social media too seriously, because as has always been the case, not everything you read is true. Not even a picture can be trusted anymore.

I suppose each successive generation thinks the previous one is out of touch to some degree, and I am willing to admit to that. But as I look into the eyes of my own grandchildren, I'm happy to say that neither Gran-Gran's or Dad's concern was for naught. Blest be the ties that bind.

**"...we have to
some degree
lost our
modesty and
decency..."**