

Good Communication is Essential for Quality Milk Production

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Frequent and good communication between milkers and managers is essential to ensure adherence to proper milking techniques, prevent drug residues and ensure quality milk production. Nearly all positive drug residue shipments and rejected loads for poor quality are a result of a breakdown in communication on the farm. These are instances where the correct message was not conveyed to the proper person at the proper time.

Do your employees know what is expected of them? Most employees want to do what is right and want to do their jobs well. Communicating *what, how and when* to your employees is essential to the success of your operation.

According to Dr. Bernie Erven of The Ohio State University, communication occurs in three forms; verbal, non-verbal (body language) and written. Written and verbal instructions provide guidance for employees. Non-verbal communication is displayed by body language and will transmit feelings and emotions to employees. Positive non-verbal communication generally leads to positive employee feedback and feelings. Negative non-verbal communication can lead to negative employee feelings of insecurity and low morale.

At this year's Great Lakes Dairy Conference, Dr. Erven noted that taking the time to create written job descriptions for employees is an excellent tool for

farms. Written job descriptions let employees know up front what is expected of them, which may reduce future work issues.

All work processes on the farm should be written and available for employees to refer to when needed. Milking procedures, drug treatment programs, cleaning programs and other important farm processes should be posted for all employees to follow.

When training new employees, it is important for owners/managers to be involved. Do not just rely on written protocols or another employee to train the new hire.

During the training process, always make sure your message is

MMPA Member Testing Fees

- **Scheduled Herd Tests:** \$1 per sample
 - Includes three herd tests within 12 months.
 - The samples can be tested for any of the following: Culture for *Streptococcus agalactiae*, *Strep non ag*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, coagulase negative staph, total coliform, E-Coli. In addition, samples can be tested for somatic cell count, raw bacteria count, and components.
 - All herd tests with more than 10 samples must schedule with the laboratory through your MMPA Member Representative. *Ten or more unscheduled cow samples will be charged at \$2 per sample.*

- ***Mycoplasma* Cultures:** \$ 8 per sample
- **Bacteriology Cultures:** \$10 per sample
 - *Includes identification of bacteria and drug susceptibility.*
- **Johne's Milk Test:** \$ 6 per sample
- **MUN Test:** \$ 5 per sample

Payment for testing will be made through an automatic milk check deduction.

All tests must be scheduled through your MMPA Member Representative or the laboratory.

Quality Watch

understood. Ask for feedback and listen carefully to employee comments. It is critical for the success of your business and will enhance your relationship with employees.

In successful operations employees must feel free to communicate with their supervisor and feel that what is said is heard. Failure to make this happen will result in employee withdrawal from participation in further communication as well as a reluctance to take responsibility and "ownership" in the operation.

Dr. Val Farmer uses the ground rules shown at right to ensure successful communication. Using all or a few of these rules will enhance communication on your operation.



Ground Rules for Successful Communication

For both parties:

- One person has the floor at a time.
- Agree to discuss one problem at a time.
- Discuss the present problem only.
- Allow time for tensions to decrease.
- Summarize any commitments made or solutions to be carried out.

For the speaker:

- Choose a good time.
- Use common courtesy.
- Use a calm tone of voice.
- Don't overload.
- Show you understand and that the speaker's opinion has value.

For the listener:

- Stay in the listener role.
- Try to "read the feelings" of the speaker and what he or she is saying.
- Summarize key points.
- Watch your nonverbal communication.

MMPA Quality Premium Program

Somatic Cell Count premiums and deductions (in addition to Federal Order SCC Adjustments computed in the producer pay price) will be paid at the following levels:

• 50,000 or below	+45¢ / cwt.
• 51,000 - 75,000	+40¢ / cwt.
• 76,000 - 100,000	+35¢ / cwt.
• 101,000 -125,000	+30¢ / cwt.
• 126,000 -150,000	+25¢ / cwt.
• 151,000 - 175,000	+20¢ / cwt.
• 176,000- 200,000	+15¢ / cwt.
• 201,000 -225,000	+10¢ / cwt.
• 226,000- 275,000	+05¢ / cwt.
• Over 750,000	-25¢ / cwt.

A payment of 5¢ / cwt. will be added for each of the following, if the count is equal to or below:

- 10,000 Raw Bacteria Count
- 20,000 Pre-Incubated (PI) Count

There will be a deduction of 10¢ / cwt. for the following criteria:

- Greater than 100,000 Raw Bacteria Count

A high raw count deduction will be waived if the producer has received the quality premium the previous three months for raw bacteria count.

To qualify for Raw, PI and Somatic Cell Count premiums there must **not** be any of the following during the month:

- Positive drug residue
- Abnormal freeze points
- High load count shipment or rejected load shipment
- #3 or #4 sediment *
- Raw Bacteria count over 100,000 *

The count levels for raw and PI will be determined on one test run per month.

** Note: These do not affect the somatic cell count premium.*

To qualify for MMPA volume premiums there must be:

- No high load count shipment or rejected load shipment during the month
- No positive drug residue shipments during the month
- No abnormal freeze points during the month
- An average somatic cell count of 750,000 or less.