



Quality Watch

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Milking Systems Performance

This article is the first in what will hopefully become a regular feature that highlights some handy tips and recommendations to members to keep their milking systems functioning properly. It will be compiled by members of the MMPA Milking Systems Performance Assurance Team. MMPA Member Representative Steve Lehman wrote the helpful tips below. We look forward to providing you with more helpful tips to improve your milking system performance in the future.

The Vacuum Gauge – Your “Silent Sentinel”

Perhaps the simplest but most informative component of the milking system is the vacuum gauge. An accurate, properly installed gauge can warn you of potential problems with your system as long as it is maintained properly and used on a regular basis.

Location is the most critical factor affecting the effectiveness of your vacuum gauge. It should be located at eye level at a point nearest to the cow at milking time. In the case of a pipeline system, this would be on the vacuum line near the sanitary trap. In a bucket milking system, two gauges would be ideal – one near the vacuum regulator, and the other at a point furthest from the vacuum pump – where differences in vacuum level due to a plugged vacuum line may be observed.

The manner of mounting is important to prevent damage to the gauge, especially from moisture. A 3” horizontal and 3” vertical offset from a vertical vacuum line will help to keep wash water from entering the gauge. The offset should be installed with a slight angle toward the vacuum line to allow any moisture to drain toward the line. In the case of a horizontal line, a 3” vertical standpipe is sufficient.

Accuracy of the gauge is critical to its value as a diagnostic tool. It should be checked at least yearly against an accurate electronic gauge. All MMPA Member Representatives are equipped with the Sentinel Digiment, and may be asked to perform this service for you.

A variety of mechanical and electronic vacuum gauges

are available through the MMPA Member Merchandise program, along with a package that includes the proper pipe fittings for easy installation and testing of the gauge.

Any questions, suggestions, or comments on this feature should be addressed to Steve Lehman via the Novi office, or by e-mail at lehman@mimilk.com.

An accurate, properly installed and maintained vacuum gauge can warn you of potential problems when used on a regular basis.