

LOOK, LISTEN, AND FEEL: A LIFESAVER!

Leo Timms

ISU Extension & Outreach State Dairy Specialist

ltimms@iastate.edu

515-294-4522

LOOK, LISTEN, AND FEEL! Critical words and concepts you learn in first aid and CPR that are imperative to assess a person's well being who's been traumatized. **LOOK** at their position, complexion, vital visual signs; get close and **LISTEN** for airflow and breathing; and **FEEL** for a pulse which assures blood flow.

These same words are critical and are the basis for **assessment and health of your milking equipment and routines**. They can be a lifesaver and are often the difference between profitability and problems, as **proper airflow and milk flow** are as vital to milking equipment as air and blood flow is to humans.

➤ **LOOK! (use your eyes to assess vital signs, including milk flow!)**

- Look to make sure **teats**, especially ends are **clean and dry** before putting milker unit on.
- Look to see that **milk gushes into the claw continuously** once the unit is attached.
- Look to see that **milk moves as a fast slug through the milk hose!** *If slow, look for clogged bleed holes in claws/shells.*
- Look at all the **rubber parts (inflations and hoses)!** Are they worn out, cracked, kinked?
- Look at your **regulator?** When's the last time you *cleaned the air filter?*
- Look at your **vacuum gauge**. Is it the same level every day? Does it fluctuate? When you turn the system off, does it go to zero?

➤ **LISTEN! (use your ears to assess proper air flow!)**

- Listen to the **air bleeding into your claws/shells**. No noise means slow, poor milkout!
- Listen to your **pulsators**. (better yet-take off an air hose and listen to the intermittent air bursts). They should be loud and crisp and all units the same. Critical for teat health!
- Listen to your **regulator!** It should be letting in a lot of air (your air insurance policy)!
- Listen for **irregular air sounds!** (leaks, cracks, tore inflations, etc). This is detrimental to equipment and cow health!

➤ **FEEL! (use your fingers to assess proper unit function!)**

- Feel (put finger) on bleed holes. You should feel the suction!
- Feel (**put 4 fingers**) **in the inflations** of each unit! Do they feel similar? Different? This tells vitals about inflations and pulsation functions (twisted, leaks, proper massage, etc.)

LOOK, LISTEN, AND FEEL – critical steps in lifesaving for humans and cows (milking time). But don't wait until after the trauma occurs! Use your senses and these simple tools on a routine basis to assure healthy milking practices and equipment. Your cow's and your livelihood depend on it!