

The way we harvest milk from our cows

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Milk is one of the most important animal products for human consumption. The demand is to produce high quality milk with a composition that meets the consumers' needs.

Milking is not only a procedure where the milk is drained from the cow's teats, it is an event where many mechanisms are activated in the body of the cow. The possibility to interact with the cow in order to produce milk with high quality and optimal yield, is therefore partly through the milking technique and milking routines.

The purpose of this series of milk harvesting articles is to explain the correct way of milking our cows, and to ensure that we can do so for the life-span of the cow, without harming the animal. We will learn to understand how the cow is functioning and see how the technique has succeeded to meet the demands of proper milking.

FIGURES:

1. The most natural way of milking a cow, her own calf!
2. The principle of hand milking – squeezing milk from the teats

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Milking is also an occasion where the farmer often has the opportunity to control and observe the cow. How is the milking machine acting on the teat? The principle of machine milking differs from the principle of hand milking or suckling. During hand milking the milk is pressed out, while during suckling the milk is mainly pressed, and to some degree, sucked out (See Figures 1-3).

During machine milking the milk is sucked out by means of vacuum supplied by the milking machine, an aspect that we will discuss in the next issue of *Ubisi Mail* (See Figure 4).

If a constant sucking is applied to the teat, the cow will experience a lot of pain and possible permanent damage to the teats. Therefore the milking machine is constructed so that sucking is interrupted by rhythmical motions (opening and closing) of the liner. Consequently, the teats are exposed to massage and congestion in the teat end is prevented.

Why do we want to milk our cows with a machine? It is obvious that if we let the calves suckle on the cows that we will not benefit from the milk produced from the cow, although we have to make sure that the calf gets the first milk (colostrum) from her soon after birth.

But then we want to harvest the milk ourselves, either for own consumption or for selling it to other people in need for it. By milking with hand we can only milk a certain amount of milk from the cow, and will loose at least 30-40% of the milk, which will stay in the cow's udder. Machine milking will enable us to milk out all the milk from the cow, and in this way we stimulate the cow to produce more milk. We will discuss in the next issues of *Ubisi Mail* how you can produce quality milk from your cows and to secure higher milk production. A simple cheap way to milk a few cows is by making use of a mobile milking machine. See Figure 5 for the DeLaval solution.

(Please feel free to contact the author should you need more information on machine milking) UM

FIGURES:

3. Hand milking into a bucket



4. Machine milking



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5. Simple machine milking – DeLaval mobile machine