



▶ Wayside Dairy's David Rivera unloads the dairy's 55-pound capacity Continental Pro-Series Washer-Extractor.



▶ Dan Natzke (right) of Wayside Dairy with Jeremy Natzke (left) and David Rivera (center).



dairy farms

Continental Washers May Promote Lower SCC and Decrease Mastitis

Three Wisconsin dairies recently installed on-premise Continental washer-extractors to properly clean the cloth towels used to prepare cow udders for milking. By thoroughly cleaning the towels, the new high-efficiency laundry equipment helps reduce cases of mastitis and may correlate to decreased bacterial and somatic cell counts (SCC) in milk. In turn, dairies enjoy higher milk-processor incentives.

Milk processors evaluate milk quality based on the number of somatic cells, or white blood cells, present in milk, according to Dr. Mike Maroney, University of Wisconsin-Extension Milk Quality Veterinarian. Dairies with low SCC, he says, not only produce more milk per cow than dairies with higher counts, they enjoy larger kickbacks, or premiums, from milk processors. "Quality premiums increase the price the farmer is paid for their product," says Maroney. "Milk with lower SCC has been shown to yield more cheese."

Pond Hill Dairy, a 700-head operation in Ft. Atkinson, Wis., maintains an average SCC of 160,000, which generates premiums of up to \$10,000 per month, according to owner Keith Moritz. At Holsum Dairy in Hilbert, Wis., premiums are even larger. The 3,400-head operation produces cell counts as low as 175,000. This generates kickbacks of up to \$20,000 per month, according to veterinarian and owner Dr. Kenn Buelow. Such incentives provide a significant boost to any dairy's bottom line.

"Having clean teats correlates directly with mammary health and low somatic cell counts," adds Buelow, who spent 13 years making house calls to dairies throughout Minnesota, New Mexico, Colorado, Indiana and Texas. Avoiding mastitis means dairies also avoid the vet fees and antibiotics required to treat the infection—a sum of \$100 to \$300 per case.

Proper preparation of the udder and teats is key to achieving lower SCC, according to Moritz and Buelow. It's also key to

reducing cases of mastitis and the infection's resulting expense. And, they agree, using absorbent towels that have been properly cleaned helps ensure this success.

The only trick to using cloth, however, is ensuring it is properly cleaned after each use. That's why these dairy owners installed Continental Pro-Series Washer-Extractors. Continental Pro-Series Washer-Extractors reach extract speeds up to 387 G-force. As a result, more water is removed from each load, which not only reduces dry time, it can eliminate the need to dry towels altogether.

"A slightly damp towel with a hint of bleach is better at getting the stuff off udders that you can't see," maintains Moritz. But, for dairy owners who prefer to use dry towels, Continental's high extract can considerably shorten the time a load takes in the dryer, and in turn, cut gas usage by up to 40 percent.

Dairy owner Dan Natzke milks 1,200 cows each day at Wayside Dairy in Wayside, Wis. Before tripling the size of his dairy two years ago—from 400 to 1,200 cows—Natzke used a topload washer to clean dairy towels. It took 80 minutes to wash and dry a load of 100 towels. Now, with the new 55-pound capacity Continental washer-extractor and 75-pound dryer, it takes half the time to complete a load triple that size. Plus, towels get cleaner, which can directly correlate to improved mammary health.

Once programmed, the machines automatically inject the appropriate amount of detergent and bleach at the correct water temperature and cycle. This ensures towels are thoroughly cleaned each time. The feature also eliminates chemical waste.

As the owner of the largest of the three operations, Buelow says Holsum Dairy launders 9,000 towels daily. Yet, a 55-gallon barrel of detergent lasts 11 months and costs only \$700.

The automatic injection also saves operators a step in the laundry process. "Anything a machine can do that labor can do is money because it's done so much more consistently," adds Moritz.

"I'm really happy with the results we get from towels," says Buelow. "And I'm really happy with the reliability of the washer."