

Beyond Static Parlour Testing

Neville Brentnall , P&L's Milking Parlour & Mastitis Specialist Consultant, offers some good advice for all milk farmers and their herd.

Going beyond the static test can make the difference between success and failure. With promising signs for the future of the dairy industry, it's never been more important to check out the parlour properly.

The milking parlour is at the heart of any dairy farm large or small - It can also be the main cause of all sorts of health issues and loss of profit.

All milk producers are familiar with having their plant tested on a regular basis, whether it is for farm assurance or an on-going mastitis investigation. The static test establishes amongst the basic parameters of milking machine function from pulsation characteristics to vacuum pump output versus specification, vacuum regulator sensitivity and leakage, equipment compatibility and overall vacuum reserve. These results then are a good referral point when further evaluative assessments are needed.

A broad analogy of the static parlour test would be to put your car on blocks and start up the engine: the clutch and gearbox appear to work, the steering seems fine, the wheels go round and the lights work. Take it off the blocks and actually road test the car only to find the brakes are poor, the steering is worn and there is vibration at speed.

In no way am I trying to demean the value of the static parlour test itself, but attempt to illustrate the fact that further evaluation is usually needed to optimise plant function. The modern cow is giving more milk, faster, and is less tolerant of poor milking machine setup.

A static test cannot tell you what vacuum level the plant should be operating at and similarly for the ACRs, it cannot test function and timing or the overall vacuum stability of the plant. These three key areas can only be assessed dynamically when the plant is under load, during milking.

We are in an industry where animal welfare is paramount, yet the irony is we are connecting a machine to an animal to remove significant volumes of fluid! So when you apply your next cluster ask yourself: 'Am I actually milking this cow or just extracting milk?'

Neville Brentnall

To explore further the impact of thorough parlour assessment and to go beyond the static test, contact P&L and arrange a farm visit.

Call us today on 01948 880261