

Merck Animal Health Releases Second Module In Dairy Care365™ Training Series – Milk Parlor Handling

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In today's challenging economy, it's vital that dairy producers make the most of every husbandry practice, including low-stress handling of their herd. Effective handling results in increased milk production, improved animal well-being and safer working conditions for employees. Merck Animal Health's new "Moving Cows to the Milking Parlor" training, the second module in the company's Dairy Care365 training series developed in partnership with the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, highlights the importance of this management practice and the value it can bring to the operation.

"Applying good dairy stockmanship techniques can make a significant difference – fewer injuries to livestock and their handlers, improved cattle responsiveness, and increased feed consumption that equates to healthier and more productive animals – all of which result in a more successful, profitable operation," says Mike Bolton, D.V.M., Merck Animal Health technical services manager. "The training offered through Dairy Care365 provides producers with the information they need to achieve the greatest return on their investments, as well as help ensure their employees understand and are using the best management practices to help improve the overall care of the animals and positively impact the bottom line of the operation."

"A new environment" at California dairy

The Charles Ahlem Ranch, in Hilmar, Calif., has had great success in integrating the Dairy Care365 Training Series into their employee training program. Frank Dinis, herd manager at the 6,000-cow dairy, says workman's compensation at their five facilities has decreased by nearly half since the dairy started using the program.

"We are seeing a new environment unfold at our dairy," says Dinis. "In addition to a reduction in small dairy injuries, our cows are calmer and employees are better educated about cow handling concepts and why implementing solid practices are so important to the success of our business. Dairy stockmanship is something we can easily take for granted, but by focusing on good animal handling, we have changed the way our dairy operates for the better."

Understanding cow behavior

Moving dairy cattle to the milking parlor requires an understanding of how cows behave and react to their surroundings. This training module presents the information in an easy-to-understand format that allows participants to learn how to effectively manage dairy cattle in a low-stress manner. Upon completion of this course, dairy employees will:

- Know how to control a cow's movement
- Understand how to apply pressure effectively with multiple cows and
- Learn how to move cows out of the pen, to the holding area, into the milking parlor and back to their pens calmly, safely and efficiently.

The training courses are offered in English and Spanish and take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the course, participants can take a short quiz to test their knowledge. Dairy managers also can use the results of the training to help identify areas of improvement and additional training.

The first Dairy Care365 course, "Introduction to Dairy Stockmanship," was introduced last fall. Both courses are available free of charge on USB flash drive and CD. To receive a copy of the first two courses, contact your local Merck Animal Health representative or e-mail info@DairyCare365.com. Δ