

Low Cost Parlors and Automatic Milking Systems On-Farm Education

A.S. Leaflet R2878

Larry Tranel, ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Field Specialist, NE/SE Iowa

Summary and Implications

Sixteen of 45 producers who received an individual farm visit follow-up responded to a post survey. 82% responded yes that as a result of Extension’s promotion, fact sheets, seminars, workshops, farm tours and/or individual consultation, they have made a decision to install (or not install) a low cost parlor or a robotic milking system. 46% have already installed; 33% are presently installing; and 21% will install in the future. 6 installed a robotic milking system; 8 installed a low cost parlor; and 3 installed an “other type” of milking system change. 7 producers felt the individual farm visits were worth an average of \$49,549 due to profits realized from making changes to their operation.

Needs Identification

The ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team recognized a high need and interest to better understand various milking system options to reduce risk for the future of their dairy operations. This was recognized and aided by

Milking Facilities

2 Tie-Stall Barn to Parlor Upgrade
 9 Remodeled Low Cost Parlor
 3 New Milking Parlor
 6 Robotic Milking System

Dairy Housing Facilities

4 Freestall Building Design
 6 Cow Comfort/Stall Design
 6 Lighting/Ventilation Design
 2 Heifer/Transition Cow Design

Other Concerns

5 Dairy Farm Profitability
 6 Dairy Financial Analysis
 6 Labor/Milking Management
 2 Managing Feed Costs

Other Areas not listed: BST vs no BST; land purchases

Producers were asked to list any *estimated* dollar or production improvement Dr. Tranel and ISU Extension has had by way of dollar value, milk production increases, milking labor decreases, somatic cell count decreases or feed cost decreases. 7 producers responded with data totaling \$346,840 in value or \$49,549 average value per farm per year.

Producers we asked to comment on the **impact** Dr. Tranel had or will have on your dairy regarding profit and quality of life for you and your family or employees and add any **strengths** or **weaknesses** in his performance with the following responses: Dr. Tranel looked at our facilities and helped develop a plan that would work well for our existing tie stall barn for a robotic milking system addition. The robotic milking system has vastly improved our quality of life....We felt Dr. Tranel was easy to work with and open to all idea’s presented. Dr. Tranel’s visit and info was personally very helpful. Dr. Tranel tried to address any

a grant funded by Risk Management Education Center. Making milking easier and safer while assisting producers balance cost effectiveness and quality of life are deemed important by the dairy industry.

Programmatic Response

As part of the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team, this Dairy Field Specialist followed up many educational programs on Automatic Milking Systems (AMS) and Low Cost Parlors (LCP) with individual on-farm visits. A total of 45 dairy producers were visited. 16 producers returned a post visit survey.

Outcome Indicators

100% of producers surveyed rated the teaching or consulting effectiveness of this Dairy Field Specialist as Good or Excellent. 100% of producers found this Dairy Field Specialist valuable in assisting dairy farm management decisions. 93% of producers agreed this Dairy Field specialist had an impact on the understanding of the economics or profitability of their dairy farm and as they were assisted in the following areas: (number denotes producers assisted with each item)

issues—they’re complicated enough to make the decision hard but we’ll be referring back to him. We used Dairy TRANS for economic analysis...in a \$500,000 expansion...Larry played a key role. ISU Extension is the only government program that knows what the hell they’re doing. That includes crop production to farm management. I borrow every idea I have off Larry and others at ISU Extension. Dr. Tranel has helped us with many projects we have looked into or done in the past. Thanks to Dr. Tranel for all the help—would do it all over the same way. Dr. Tranel helped make life better—it was remodel our parlor or quit milking. Dr. Tranel not only helped us design our parlor, but listened to our thoughts and used them. Thanks.

Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by the North Central Risk Management Education Center and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.