

Quick Fixes to Improve Cow Flow

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Needing a project for winter? Or more ideas on how to fix the annoying problems in your dairy? Check the list below for a few ideas. Add to them if you can to benefit other farmers - any suggestions can be emailed to SMASH at smash.registrar@gmail.com and we will put them up on the website.

Farm races

Adjust track camber, surface, steepness and eliminate bottle necks

- Put wooden rails on sides of entry race near yard.
- Align entry races to yard and adjust width of races to be consistent all the way.
- Round off sharp corners.

Prevent stones getting on to yard

- Alter entry so cows do not step down on to concrete risking foot injury.
- Replace electric fences with non-threatening fencing e.g. post and rail, within 200m from dairy.

Yards

Scabble slippery concrete so cows feel safe

- Make the backing gate hock rail height i.e. about 500 mm.
- Fill in any wedges on backing gate where cows may get trapped.
- Put a bell on electric-motor driven backing gate so cows can hear it moving.
- Putting a gate inside the backing gate will allow the second herd through easier and quicker.

Measure the yard wash hose flow and adjust system to get 250 litres/min through yard wash nozzle

- Set up sprinkler system to cool cows as they arrive and to keep yard wet for easier washing.

Block off distracting views from cows as they are about to enter bail area

- Eliminate any grid, channel, etc. especially in the entrance to the bail area where the change in surface impacts on cow flow.

General

Learn to like cows, talk to them gently and politely

- Adjust your behaviour towards cows to compensate for design faults, e.g., slow down.

Eliminate all parts of dairy that can hurt cows, e.g., cow-injuring protrusions, gudgeons and sharp edges

- Cut out vertical posts or alter so they do not affect cows.

Eliminate ramps and replace with steps for cow security and safety

- Put up fishing lines to reduce bird roosting/contamination of plant.
- Set up teat spray mixing procedure and other procedures, laminate them and hang where visible.
- Cut back sharp angles of corners so cows can turn easier.
- Fit rubber stoppers where metal hits metal e.g. gates, to reduce noise.
- Remove, fill in or redesign drains so cow flow is not affected by the change in surface.
- If unhappy with cow flow get a specialist and also check for stray voltage.

Inside bail area

- Improve lead-in to breast rail (make it high).

Fit rotating back bar to replace chains and to avoid need to get up into yard

Adjust breast rail height to suit cow size/improve flow

- Install neck- anti-jumping - rail to prevent jumpers in herringbones.
- Fit zig zag rump rail if bail spacing over 650 mm.
- Fit nib wall for cow security.
- Use high-lifting head gates; make operable from any position in pit.
- For a swing head gate, fit pull cords to open it – and to shut it.
- Adjust head gate angle so first cow is comfortable.
- Position meal feeders at a comfortable feeding height above floor.
- Set up even lighting inside bail area.

Exit

- Add to area of concrete at exit if less than 1 sq metre/cluster.
- Use improved footbath design.
- Maintain exit race in good condition. Widen or double up if necessary.
- Make sure cows go out of sight of exiting cows as they walk away from dairy.
- Give the first cow near the head gate plenty of room.

Machines

- Lower milkline if more than about 1600 mm above the cow platform.
- Fix any cluster alignment fault so cows milk evenly.
- Put air filtration to quieten and protect pulsation system.
- Check and adjust vacuum level. Target: zero teat damage!
- Adjust stainless droppers so clusters hang evenly without excessive sagging.
- Move noisy regulators out of the bail area.
- Quieten any noisy vacuum pump.

Management

- Set up mirror above cupping position/pit exit to see cows in yard and be able to control the backing gate better.

Tie cord to backing gate/feed switch/controls to allow operation along pit length

- Fit timer on the backing gate control to regulate/standardize backing gate travel.

Label the plant. Use Josh's green tape system for open/shut valves.

- Set up standard operating procedures for milking.
- Use the 'Patoka' treatment/marking system for cows.
- Simplify drafting systems and make them operable from the pit.

Train heifers to milking

- Teatspray before calving to ensure good teat condition.
- Improve inefficient teatspray systems. Replace hand-pumped sprayer with mechanical system.
- Locate head gate control rod alongside or inside kick rail.
- Do not tighten cows up in yard so they are unable to sort themselves into the preferred milking order.
- Find out if MaxT (Fixed-time milking) is right for you.
- If have any signs of teat damage, get specialist advice to remedy.

People are important too

- Install a good sound system.
- Improve lighting in bail area.
- Install a coffee maker.

Fit rubber matting pit/cups-on to improve milker comfort/health

- Alter jetter system to make it easy to use, e.g., wind-down or swing-down.
- Shift controls to minimise the effort needed to operate them.
- Set up handy containers and shelves to hold gear used frequently.
- Deepen the pit if too shallow.
- Fit a step-up rail to read ear tags.
- Wear gloves.
- Use simple efficient milking routines.
- Use easy cluster changing methods i.e. round the circle and/or two at a time.

Analyse your problems and find solutions to any technical/milking/management issues. Include the website '**Milksmart improving milk harvesting efficiency**' as a source of information: www.milksmart.co.nz