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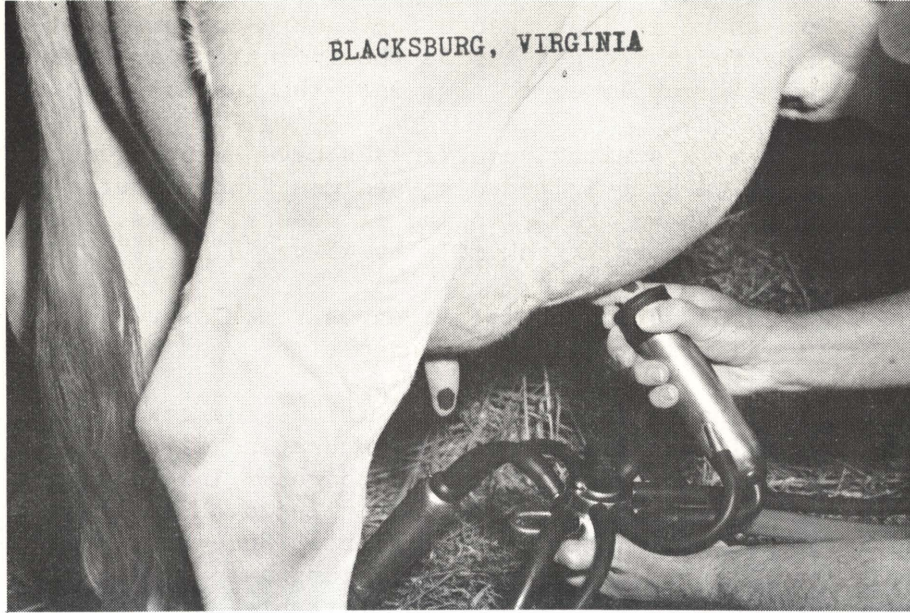
Dairy guidelines

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COW CLIPPING IS IMPORTANT FOR QUALITY MILK PRODUCTION

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Clipping cows is one management practice which could stand more attention on many dairy farms. Many dairymen delay this chore until it is practically impossible to do a good job.

Clipping plays a role in the production of a wholesome product. Clipping is a must if milk is to have low bacteria and sediment counts. A recent survey found that 18% of milk samples obtained from retail outlets had an unclean flavor. Dirty cows contribute to this problem.

Clipping can play a part in helping to control lice. When left uncontrolled, lice steal away profits. Lice are prevalent everywhere but go unnoticed on many dairy farms. Partial or complete clipping of the cow is a good lice control measure.

Clipping should be done early in the fall before the hair grows long and manure and dirt packs accumulate. Elsewise manure cakes on flanks, thighs, and udders and becomes difficult to remove. Besides, the milk ordinance and code of the U. S. Public Health Service states that flanks, bellies and tails of all milking cows shall be free of visible dirt at the time of milking.

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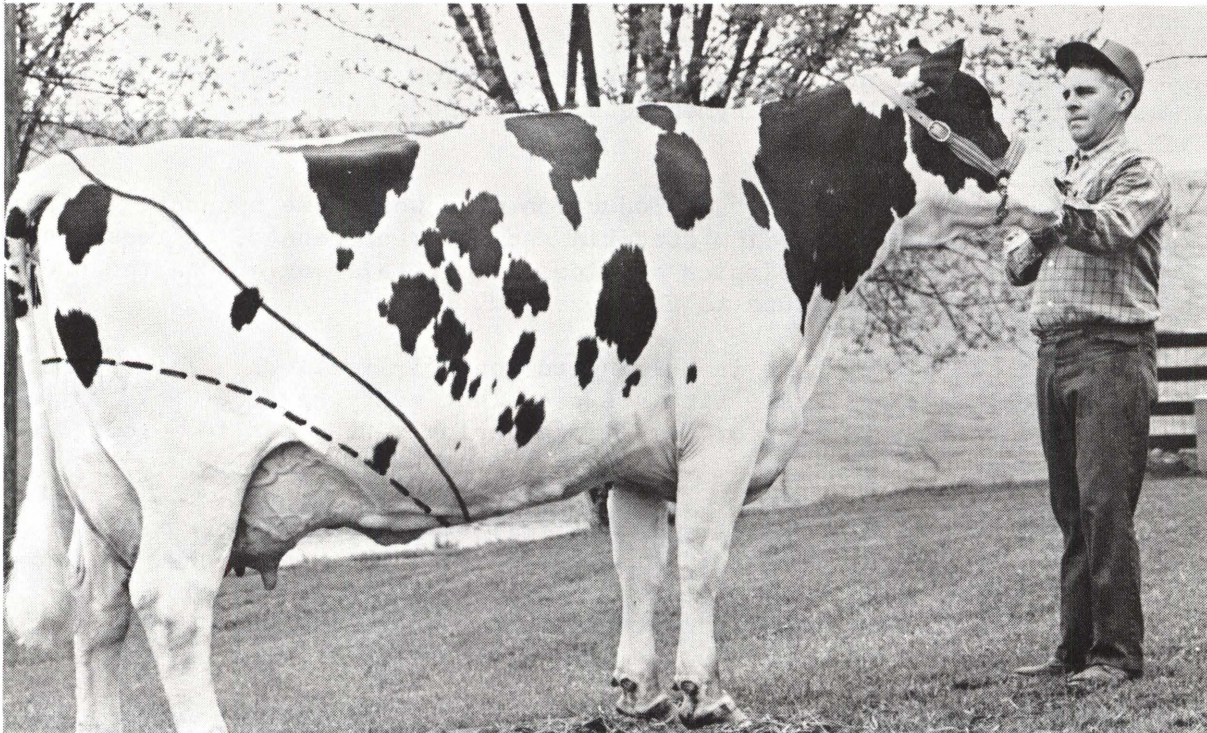
Unclean cows may assist the development of an acute coliform infection in the udder. Unwashed manure-contaminated udders and teats and mass spraying of teats and udders at milking, followed by inadequate drying, are two causes of coliform infections. A good preventive measure is to wash udders with as little water as possible and to thoroughly dry teats and udders. A clipped udder is much easier to clean and dry at milking than is an unclipped udder. With well-clipped udders there is less chance for manure-contaminated water droplets, which are high in bacteria, to get inside the inflations and subsequently to gain access to the milk supply or to pass into the teat canal.

For many years, milk sanitation officials have encouraged dairymen to clip their cows as a positive step in reducing sediment and bacteria contamination of milk. Research has shown that clipping of udders, tails, and flanks will reduce the bacteria count in bulk tank milk by 45 to 75%.

Clipping is a labor saving chore; it saves time in preparing cows for milking. On some cows, clipping will reduce prep-time by as much as 50%.

The timing of clipping is especially critical for cows housed in stall barns. These cows will usually accumulate manure and dirt quicker during the winter months than cows housed in free stall barns. This does not mean that cows housed in free stalls do not need to be clipped. Usually a clipping in the fall and again in late winter is sufficient. Some cows, especially those dry in February and March, do not lose their long hair by the time spring temperatures exceed 70°F. They become uncomfortable and show it. Clip them all over except for their switch.

How Should Cows Be Clipped?



To do a good job of clipping, follow the numbered steps above.

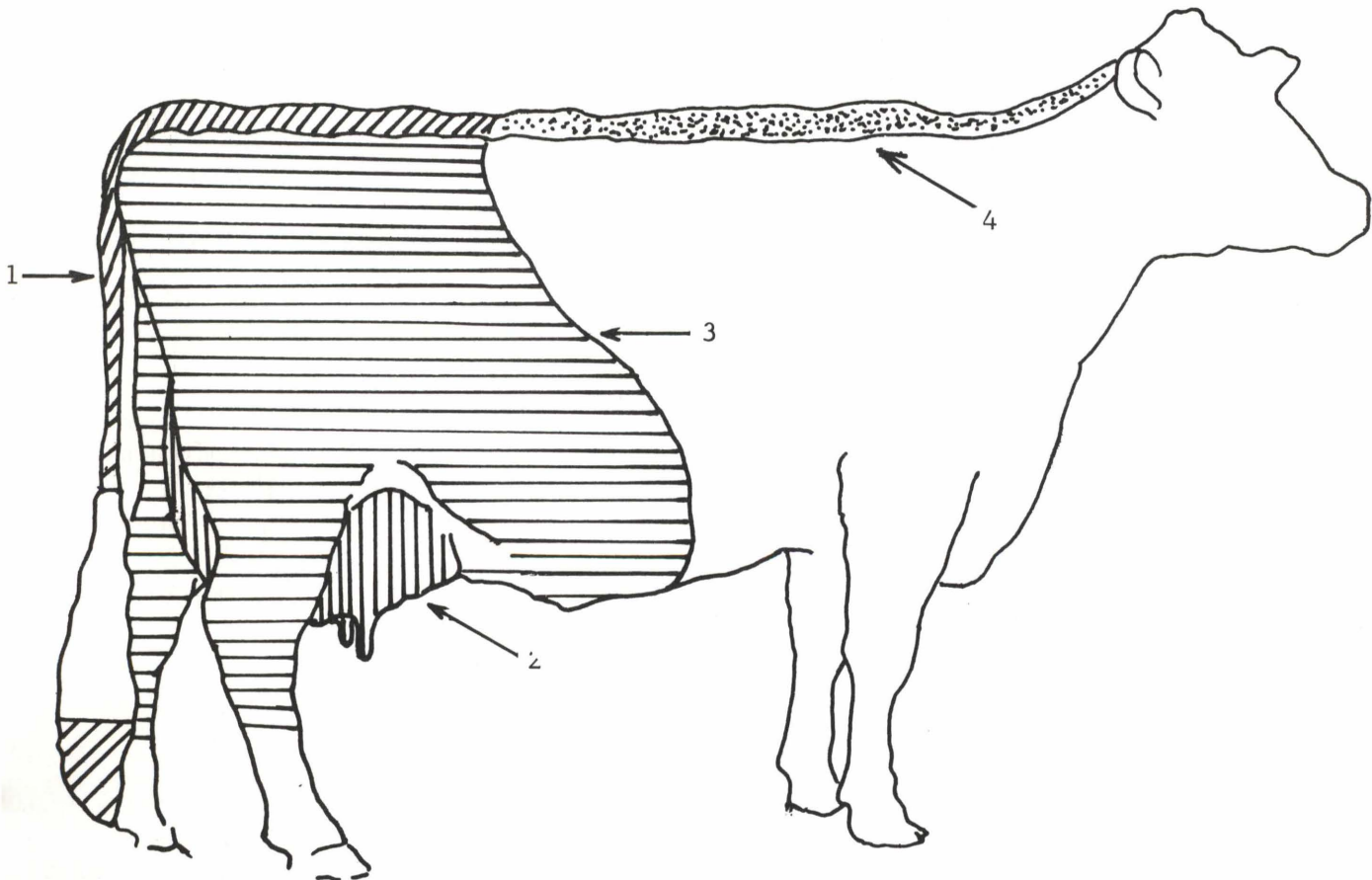
1. Clip off the tip of the switch at least one foot from the ground. Some dairymen like to clip the switch off to within three to four inches of the end of the tail bone. Start clipping the tail about two to four inches above the long hairs on the switch. Clip the tail, tailhead, and backbone up to the hooks or hip bones.

2. Clip the udder. Clip against the natural lay of the hair. Stretch the skin tight to prevent nicking.

3. Clip the legs, underline, flanks, thighs, and thurls. As a guide, run a clipped line from the milk wells up behind the hook bone to a point on the backbone.

4. Clip three or more full strokes along the topline to the poll. The restlessness caused by irritation of lice, dirt, and dandruff is reduced by this practice.

There is a practical minimum area that should be clipped. This depends upon individual cows and type of housing. Most cows can be clipped in the minimum area, shown in the picture below, if they are housed in free stalls or in extremely well bedded and roomy loose housing situations. The hair is removed from the hocks to a point approximately 12 inches below the hook bones (see the dotted line). Cows that are crowded in loose housing or that are housed in stanchion barns should be clipped in the maximum area (the area below the solid line in the picture).



Clipping Tips

Rest the clippers, with the motor running, against the animal's shoulders to accustom her to the feel and sound before clipping begins. Clip against the lay of the hair except for areas where clipped and unclipped areas are to be blended together. Use both hands for clipping. The free hand can stretch the skin and smooth the area in front of the clippers.

Clipper Care

Proper use, care, and preventive maintenance of clippers will pay big dividends in preventing malfunctions and expensive repairs. Proper care includes:

1. Oil through the 2 holes in the top of the head.
2. Remove blades occasionally and clean dirt and hair out of clipper head.
3. Always use sharp blades. Dull blades will not do a satisfactory job and may overload the motor and cause damage to it. They also produce heat which irritates the animal.
4. Adjust tension to a minimum to get clippers to cut. Excessive tension will wear blades and dull them, as well as overload and overheat the motor.
5. Occasionally dip clipper head, while running, in a container of fuel oil or similar light lubricant to flush out dirt and hair and to lubricate the blades. Let excess drip off before using. The bottom half of a gallon plastic jug or a wide-mouth coffee can is ideal for this purpose.
6. Be careful with clipper blades--they are hard and brittle. Dropping or striking them against metal or concrete can break teeth and destroy blades.
7. Always keep at least two sharp sets of blades on hand. Blades can be resharpened several times by manufacturer or local service shop.

Routine Maintenance

Depending upon how much the clippers are used, they should be taken apart occasionally and the following done:

1. Clean and replace grease in clipper head.
2. Remove screens at each end of clipper and blow out accumulated dirt and hair.
3. Oil motor armature shaft through holes in case. These are wick-fed, so do not remove the wick from the holes.
4. If serious trouble develops with your clipper, return it to the manufacturer or a repair service center for reconditioning.

Storage of Clippers

Always store clippers in a safe, dry place. Use a covered container to prevent dust settling on clipper heads. Oil clipper blades before storing to prevent rust. Store with the head lower than the motor to prevent oil running back from the head into the motor and causing damage.

Pictures courtesy of Mr. James B. Smathers, Quality Control Supervisor, Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Association, and Mr. James Sumner, Associate Editor, Pennmarva.