

# Cluster flush helps keep bugs at bay

**Automatically flushing and cleansing teat liners after each cow is milked to remove residual milk and contaminants can reduce bacteria levels by over 97 per cent and help reduce the spread of mastitis.**

In trials carried out by leading veterinary surgeon Roger Blowey of the Wood Veterinary Group in Gloucester, on behalf of equipment manufacturer Vaccar, cluster flushing was shown to reduce total bacterial counts in the teat liner as well as specifically controlling levels of *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Bacterial swabs were taken from teat liners before and after they were cleansed using the Vaccar cluster flush system. All bacterial counts were significantly reduced with levels of total bacteria and *Staph aureus* reduced by over 97 per cent. Coliforms, which indicate faecal contamination, were reduced by over 89 per cent. Few farmers are aware of the importance of teat liner hygiene in controlling the risk of infection," comments Mr Blowey.

## Relaxed

"The majority of new infections enter the teat while the teat end muscles are relaxed, so the liner is a major source of potential infections. Flushing the liners reduces this risk considerably."

The Vaccar cluster flush system, which can be installed on most makes of milking parlour, works by flushing the cluster with water or sanitising solution before compressed air is blasted through the system to remove all water, leaving the cluster cleaned. Triggered automatically by the ACR the whole process takes less than 30 seconds.

"While it is possible to rinse clusters manually the approach has numerous drawbacks," explains Pete Larnar of Vaccar.

"Manual rinsing is time consuming and often leads to more clutter in the parlour. It is also possible to forget to dip clusters or to clean them inconsistently.

"Automatic flushing overcomes all of these drawbacks and ensures the risk of cow to cow transfer via liners is minimised, helping to reduce the losses associated with mastitis and boost the volume of saleable milk produced."

## Royal Welsh Show was real financial washout

Gate receipts at last year's waterlogged Royal Welsh Show, which was staged in the worst conditions since 1958, were down by £447,000 on budget, and as a result the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society expected a year-end loss of around £300,000 rather than an anticipated surplus of £185,000.

On the eve of the show the society was committed to an expenditure of £2.5m and, had the event been cancelled, the loss to the society could have spiralled to between £3m and £4m.

The figures were revealed by the chairman of the board of management, David Lewis, to members of the society's council at Builth Wells.

"To cancel Wales' premier agricultural and rural event was unthinkable and would have been catastrophic for the nation," said Mr Lewis. "The society's contribution to the rural economy is now some £40m per annum with approximately £25m of that figure emanating from the show.

"In spite of the problems of parking supporters of the show demonstrated their loyalty by turning up in force over four days."