

# Edmeston farmers put Copulsation in tie-stall

By Linda Goodwin

Bill and Wendy Westbrook of Edmeston are the first farmers in New York state to install a Copulsation milking system in a conventional tie-stall barn.

The Westbrook's operate a 90-cow registered Holstein dairy in Otsego County.

"I just wasn't happy, I knew we could milk cows better," said Bill, who was concerned about his somatic cell count approaching 500,000 per ml. Previously, they had received Super Milk awards.

The Westbrooks have been milking three times a day for about seven years. As the herd average climbed from 26,000 lbs. of milk to 26,500, Bill and Wendy both noticed teat-end problems.

"I think we were stressing them more," said Bill. He also noticed erratic milk-outs since beginning milking 3 times a day.

After reading articles about Copulsation, (New York Farmer, Aug. and Nov., 1995), Bill said increasing the rest phase seemed to make sense. He especially noticed the article about Odyssey Farms in the August issue.

"I know if something didn't work, Odyssey Farms wouldn't have it," he said. Bill lived in Columbia County, where Odyssey Farms is located, for a while before moving to Edmeston eight years ago.

Although Bill was glad someone had finally improved on the magnetic pulsator design of the 1960s, he realized installing a new milking system would not be a "cure-all."

He also evaluated the way his cows were prepped, their environment, the current milking system and the individuals doing the milking.

Bill and Wendy always keep the cows in a clean environment, using kiln-dried sawdust on rubber mats.

The milking is always done either by themselves or their full-time hired man, Michael Ditty. They use a Germania claw with 08 liners from DeLaval and try to keep the pH in the rumen constant at all times.

The herd at Wil-Wen Brook Farm is fed conventionally, receiving corn silage, haylage and given an 18% protein concentrate

from Blue Seal Feeds.

"We try to feed it as it promotes rumen health," said Bill, noting no major changes had been made in the feeding program prior to the problems arising.

Not finding any problems on which to blame their irritated teat-ends, Bill and Wendy considered changing their pulsation.

"As production increases, you have to be willing to change your milking system because that's what might be holding you back," Bill said.

Lanny Gehm, one of the inventors of Copulsation, brought a demonstration unit to the farm.

"It was a nightmare," said Bill, noting that the first cow wouldn't let-down.

However, once a kink in the air hose was discovered and corrected, "then it did what I hoped," said Bill, noting a complete milk-out.

In the first few months since installing Copulsation, the Westbrooks have noticed fresh cows milk-out completely with no oxytocin, and the edema leaves their udders in just 2 or 3 days.

Their somatic cell count has dropped back to 250,000 and "the first calf heifers stand much better too," said Wendy.

Bill is happy with his decision to install Copulsation and said the pulsators have been trouble-free.

"Teat-ends are beautiful now, and we're climbing back up on herd average," he said.



Bill Westbrook of Edmeston holds Wil-Wen Brook Bear Sapphire, the Grand Champion Holstein at the 1995 Otsego County Fair. His family (left to right) includes: Sarah, Will, Samantha, Wendy, holding Scott, and Ashley.

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