

SOUTHEAST

Steeped in tradition

Producing quality milk is a lifetime endeavor for Richard and Kathleen Stocker, Bloomington, Idaho. “Quality has always been an important part of our operation,” says Richard, noting that he first started dairying at his current location in the mid-1960s. “It’s what we’re all about here.”

The Stockers’ quality track record speaks for itself. In one recent 12-month period, the somatic cell count (SCC) for their 38-cow herd averaged just 58,500. Their average standard plate count was 3,500 and their average pre-incubation count was 8,000.

Even more impressive: Over the last 13 years, the Stockers have failed to qualify for their milk handler’s



In the past 13 years, Richard and Kathleen Stocker have failed to qualify for their handler’s monthly quality premium only once. A sure sign of a plan that works.

monthly quality premium only once. “When it happened, I got together with the field rep and we went over everything with a fine-tooth comb,” Richard explains. “We finally tracked it down to not having the water hot enough for cleaning our milking equipment.”

In explaining his approach to quality, Richard says it’s “a matter of doing a bunch of little things right day in and day out.” Some of the key points include:

- **Cow care.** At Stocker Dairy, cows are housed in a 50-cow freestall barn. “I never walk through the barn without a fork in my hands,” says Richard. “I spend a good part of my day cleaning up stalls.” For bedding, the Stockers utilize home-grown barley straw. They re-bed stalls about once a week. They also scrape alleyways every morning.

- **Keeping the cows clean keeps them healthy,** says Richard. “It also makes my job in the milking parlor easier. If I do things right in the freestall, the cows come into the parlor very clean, and that cuts down on my milking time.”

- **Milking routine.** As cows enter the double-three, walk-through barn for milking, Richard washes teats by hand with an iodine solution. Before pre-dipping, he strips each quarter to promote milk let down and to check for signs of clinical mastitis. Next, he dips teats (with an iodine dip), then dries with a paper towel. Within 45 seconds to one minute, he hangs the machine. After the cow is milked out, he post-dips.
- **Monitoring for mastitis.** Richard relies heavily on good old-fashioned “cow sense” to help spot potential mastitis cases. “With a small herd, you can tell a lot just by watching how cows come into the barn for milking,” he says. “If a cow is usually one of the first to come in but hangs back at a particular milking, it can tell you that something is up.”

Forestripping is also critical. “If I see any crud in the milk or if the quarter is hard or hot to the touch, I’ll assume the cow needs to be treated,” he says. In those cases, he milks the cow into a bucket, then marks her with orange paint on both sides. He also writes her number on a calendar.

He strictly adheres to withdrawal times, but before returning a treated cow to the milk string he sends a milk sample to his local milk plant for residue testing. “I just don’t take any chances with it,” he says.

- **Equipment upkeep.** Richard cleans all equipment thoroughly after each milking. He’s also a stickler for changing inflations on a regular basis. “We like silicone inflations,” he says. “The manufacturer recommends changing them every 6,000 milkings, but we watch them closely for signs of wear and tear, and change them sooner if we need to.”

“Richard is dedicated to producing quality milk,” notes University of Idaho dairy specialist Rick Norrell. “He runs an outstanding operation with clean cows, clean housing facilities and an exceptionally clean milking center.”

WEST REGIONAL WINNER

Stocker Dairy

Owners/Managers: Richard and Kathleen Stocker

Location: Bloomington, Idaho

Nominated by: Richard Norell, University of Idaho

Herd size: 38 cows

Production: 19,210 lb. milk (2X)

Somatic Cell Count (Avg. 12 mos.): 58,800

Somatic Cell Count (Low): 38,000

Mastitis cases (12 months): 15

Antibiotic residue violations: 0

WEST MERIT WINNER

Larry and Linda’s Brown Swiss Dairy

Owners/Managers: Larry and Linda Pitcher

Location: Trenton, Utah

Nominated by: Lindsey Dimond,
Dairy Farmers of America

Herd size: 122 cows

Production: 14,170 lb. milk (2X)

Somatic Cell Count (Avg. 12 mos.): 104,000

Somatic Cell Count (Low): 66,000

Mastitis cases (12 months): 4

Antibiotic residue violations: 0

WEST MERIT WINNER

Machado-Machado Dairy

Owners/Managers: David and Robert Machado

Location: Manteca, California

Nominated by: Chris Malherbe, DVM, Turlock, Calif.

Herd size: 1,870 cows

Production: 22,305 lb. milk (3X)

Somatic Cell Count (Avg. 12 mos.): 160,000

Somatic Cell Count (Low): 120,000

Mastitis cases (12 months): NA

Antibiotic residue violations: 1