

Introduction

As agriculture’s labor pool continues to shrink, the dairy industry faces the challenging reality of attracting and retaining employees. Other businesses like construction, landscaping, hotels, and restaurants are competing for the same type of labor. Producing high-quality milk is a labor intense job, yet it is a product that doesn’t receive a high payment compared to other industries.

Although pay is a high motivator to stay in a job, employees are often more successful and retained at higher rates if training is offered. Training helps satisfy that need to develop and challenge their own set of skills and makes them feel a sense of ownership to the farm.

Project Overview

This project developed a free, online milker training that is available in both English and Spanish. It has been designed to help dairy farm employees better understand the how's and whys of handling and milking cows.

The training includes:

- 23 short video demonstrations of on-farm practices to emphasize key milking and management techniques
- 5 printable resource materials
- 2 animations explaining how a cow turns food into milk and how somatic cells get into milk
- 7 quizzes including certificates of completion

Over 70 participants have registered from 15 states and 8 countries, including 3 universities, various dairy industry representatives/consultants, and dairy farm employees/managers ranging from 300 to 5,000 cows.

Results

How is the training being used?

Continuing education/training for current employees
On-farm training meetings
43% Using with a group of employees
29% Using with a group of students
Onboarding of new employees
Continuing education/training for themselves

Table 1. Usage of training and materials

Improved their employee’s retention in working on a dairy farm	43%
Improved employee’s training when starting to work on a dairy farm	57%
Improved communication of the hows and whys of milking	71%

Table 2. Knowledge gain from educational resources

Environmental and contagious mastitis	35%
Mastitis treatment and vaccines	79%
Intramammary treatment	67%
Importance of udder and teat health	47%
Evaluating milk quality using a CMT	47%
Milking practices that affect milk quality	39%
Animal well-being	56%
Cleanliness outside the parlor	56%
Somatic cells in milk	50%
How a cow turns food into milk	50%

These scores reflect only the person filling out the evaluation, as many used this in an on-farm setting where multiple employees were being trained.



Participant Feedback

- Good diction, pace and choice of words
- Great help for us! Thanks for putting together a great set of videos
- Training of extreme importance; helped to train me even more and be able to take more information out in the field about the importance of milk quality
- Audience loved the video animations
- Resource materials can be printed any time, any size and be used on different areas of the operation
- Appreciated the certificates

SCAN TO VIEW MILKER TRAINING PROMOTIONAL VIDEO AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR REGISTERING FOR THE COURSE:

go.iastate.edu/BilingualMilkerTraining



RESOURCES from the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dairy Team

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EMAIL

Jenn Bentley jbentley@iastate.edu

Fred Hall fredhall@iastate.edu

Larry Tranel tranel@iastate.edu