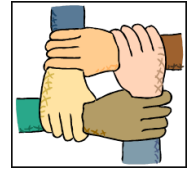




EL SOSTENTO

Helping You Manage Your Multicultural Team for Success



SOSTENTO is a Spanish word with two meanings:
sustenance (what we as farmers produce) and **support**
(what we need to provide to our team to be successful).

September 2014
Volume 2, Issue 2

How to Pick the Right Person for a Promotion

On most New York dairy farms the transition from American to Hispanic employees is a gradual one. The majority of Hispanics start in the milking parlor, but those that prove themselves to be bright and responsible employees sometimes find their way to very specialized positions. I've met talented feeders, calf feeders, breeders, herdsmen and assistant herdsmen who are committed to their jobs in the same way that many Americans in those positions are. They take their jobs seriously and place cow health and performance above all else.

Those are the best case scenarios. But how do you go about getting to that point? I've also seen the opposite: the best milker is promoted to work with the herdsmen, to breed cows, or to be the parlor supervisor. He may not excel if it's not something he's particularly interested in, if he preferred working days and now has to work nights, or if he's been placed in charge of other employees and he doesn't feel comfortable managing others. If you have an opening, *how do you go about picking the best person for the job?*

Here are some of the key qualities to look for

in an individual when considering promotion:

English Skills: In the parlor employees with poor English skills can often rely on coworkers or the parlor supervisor to communicate with management. Yet on most farms, English language skills are a must for a higher level position. Another important consideration is how much Spanish the people who will be working with them speak; if many people on your staff are fluent then maybe this isn't a concern on your dairy.

Literacy: It may sound silly, but if you're considering a position where writing and reading will be required, make sure your employee can do both of those things well. Poor school systems and poverty often times lead to a lack of educational opportunities in Mexico and Central America. It's pretty unlikely that all of your employees graduated high school— many may have attended only through 6th grade, and some may not have gone to school at all.

Reliability: Do they show up to work on time? Call in to work sick frequently? It's

In this issue:

What's in a Tortilla?	2
Overmilking	3
La Sobre Ordeña	3
All Saint's Day	4

Surprise your employees with a few new vocab words this month!

el otoño - fall

las hojas - leaves

hace frio - it's cold

el hielo - ice or frost

la calabaza - pumpkin

la manzana - apple

la madrugada - sunrise

los gansos - geese

el venado - deer

El día de Acción de Gracias -
Thanksgiving





one thing to find someone to cover for a milker, but replacing more skilled positions can be a much bigger headache, so you'll want to make sure the employee is one that you can count on every day. It's also a good idea to have a conversation about the employee's long-term plans. If he is thinking of moving back to Mexico in the not-so-distant future, you'll need to consider if the time and effort it will take to train the individual will be worth it.

Drive: Consider when you first hired the employee. How long did it take him to get up to speed? Was he comfortable asking questions? Did he show self confidence while learning new skills? You'll want to be sure that you pick someone who is up for the challenge of taking on new responsibilities.

One last consideration, which may be the most obvious, is how interested the employee is in the work. If it's obvious that you're looking to promote someone to a new position, an employee might offer to fill it. But consider his reasoning— you don't want to promote someone who is interested in a different job just to get out of working the night shift. If you've had the opportunity to work with this employee outside of the milking parlor, how did he do? Does he seem genuinely interested in doing a specific job and not just the benefits which come with it?

You're unlikely to find the perfect candidate for every job, but using these suggestions can help you to find someone who can grow into a position with time.

What's in a Tortilla?

Half-eaten packages of corn tortillas are now ubiquitous in dairy farm break rooms across the country. While Americans are quite used to flour tortillas in Tex-Mex fare like burritos and quesadillas, there's a lot more to the traditional corn tortilla than just corn.

Tortillas were first made from corn in Mexico and Central America in pre-Columbian times. Spaniards gave the thin, unleavened bread its name because of its similarity in shape to round Spanish cakes called *tortas*. Adding the diminutive “-illa” makes the name literally “little cakes”.

The traditional preparation of tortillas starts with boiling and then soaking dried corn in water that is alkalized by adding lime (think of what you spread on fields, not the fruit). This process softens the kernels and loosens the hulls, but also has some major nutritional benefits. Calcium is added, and the bound niacin (Vitamin B) becomes available for absorption. Corn that has gone through this treatment is called *nixtamal*. After washing to remove the hulls and grinding into a thick dough called *masa*, it can be used to prepare tortillas and tamales. Grinding was traditionally done by hand on a stone surface with a stone rolling pin, but is now more often done by machine.



Tortillas from Guatemala are thicker than Mexican tortillas.

To make tortillas, a golf ball sized round of dough is patted back and forth between wet hands to make a thin, round pat-ty. It is then cooked over a very hot fire on a clay *comal* or griddle. While tortillas are still often made by hand in their home countries, most tortillas that you see your employees eating are made mechanically. Mexican tortillas are thinner than tortillas from Guatemala and other Central American countries.

As you may have figured out if you ever tried to munch on a cold tortilla, they're really no good unless served warm. Cold tortillas can acquire a rubbery, stale texture that makes them nearly inedible. To warm a tortilla, grill it, toast it over a gas stove or wrap it in a damp towel and heat it in the microwave. Enjoy!

Interesting historical note: When the cultivation of corn began to spread around the world, people frequently left out the step of making the corn into *nixtamal* because they were unaware of the benefits. They instead opted to grind the dried corn into cornmeal. Diets highly dependent on cornmeal often lead to an illness called pellagra, which is due to a lack of niacin and causes diarrhea, dermatitis, dementia & death. In the first half of the 19th century, more than 3 million Americans were affected, mostly in the South. It was first identified in Spain in the 1700s, and outbreaks have occurred in the past 10 years in Nepal, Angola and Zimbabwe.

Overmilking

The milking parlor is a busy place, and we're all occasionally guilty of not paying as close attention to each individual cow as we should. Overmilking, which is applying vacuum to the teats when there is an absence of milk flow, is one problem that can be caused by inadequate milking prep. Each step of the milking routine is important, and following them all in order to prevent overmilking can go a long way in improving teat health and reducing mastitis.

The key to preventing overmilking is proper pre-milking preparation. If you prep the cow correctly for milking, the cow will let her milk down by the time the milking machine is attached so that there is an immediate flow of milk. The milk flow should continue steadily until she is done milking, at which point the machine should detach.

When you don't properly prep a cow and milk let down has not occurred prior to machine attachment, the small amount of milk being held in the teat cistern will milk out right away, but there

will be a period of very low to no milk flow before milk let down occurs and milk from the alveoli is released. This is called bi-modal milking, and the period where there is no or very low milk flow is overmilking. We want to avoid this as well as leaving the milking machine on after milk flow has dropped or stopped completely.

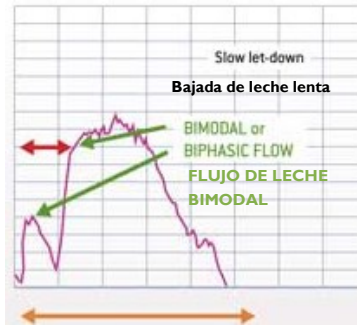
The end result of overmilking is teat end damage. Damaged teat ends are harder to clean and don't always close as well as they should after milking. Teats that are dirty and can't keep pathogens out are much more likely to lead to mastitis infections.

Some signs that you are overmilking your cows are discoloration of the teat or a ring around the end of the teat immediately after milking. Cows that dance or kick during the end of the milking cycle also point to overmilking. If you're seeing these signs, it's also a good idea to look into the automatic detachment settings, but also consider ways to improve your milking routine.



Ideal flow of milk.

**El flujo ideal de
leche.**



Overmilking: Poor teat prep can lead to longer unit on time (orange arrow vs. pink) as well as longer periods of low flow or no flow, as demonstrated by the red vs. blue arrow.

La sobre ordeña: Preparación inadecuada de las tetas resulta en más tiempo con la maquina puesta (flecha anaranjada en comparación con la rosada) y tiempos más largos con flujo bajo o falta de flujo, como demostrado por las flechas rojo y azul.

La Sobre Ordeña

La sala de ordeña es un lugar muy ocupado, y todos a veces somos culpables de no poner la atención adecuada en cada vaca como debemos. Sobre ordeñar, lo que es aplicar vacío a las tetas mientras no hay un flujo de leche, es un problema que puede ser causado por la falta de preparar bien las vacas para la ordeña. Cada paso en una rutina de ordeña es importante, y seguirlos todos para prevenir la sobre ordeña puede ayudar a mejorar la salud de las tetas y en reducir la mastitis.

La clave de prevenir la sobre ordeña es una buena preparación de la vaca antes de la ordeña. Si la preparan bien, la vaca baja su leche antes de conecten la maquina para que hay un flujo inmediata de leche. El flujo de leche debe seguir hasta que la vaca termine de ordeñar, en que punto la maquina debe desconectarse.

Cuando no preparan bien a una vaca y no baja su leche antes de que conecten la maquina, la cantidad pequeña de leche en la cisterna de la teta sale inmediatamente, pero hay un periodo de flujo de leche muy bajo o una falta completa de flujo de leche

antes de que sucede la bajada de la leche y la leche de los alvéolos pueda salir. Eso se llama ordeña bimodal y el periodo sin un flujo de leche o con un flujo de leche muy bajo es la sobre ordeña. Eso es lo que queremos evitar, igual que dejar que la maquina siga ordeñando después de que el flujo de leche baje bastante o termine completamente.

El resultado de la sobre ordeña es daño en las puntas de las tetas. Las puntas de las tetas dañadas son más difíciles de limpiar y no siempre cierran como deben después de la ordeña. Las tetas sucias que dejan entrar patógenos son más probables de causar infecciones de mastitis.

Algunas señas de que están sobre ordeñando las vacas son discoloraciones de las tetas o un anillo alrededor de la punta de la teta inmediatamente después de la ordeña. Las vacas que bailan o patean al final de la ordeña también pueden señalar la sobre ordeña. Si miran estas señas, también es buena idea fijarse de las ajustes del sistema de desconexión automático, pero también considere maneras de mejorar su rutina de ordeña.



All Saints' Day – *Día de Todos los Santos*



A grave decorated on All Saints' Day in a Guatemalan town named Todos Santos.

While Americans celebrate Halloween on October 31st with costumes and candy, Guatemalans honor the dead on All Saints' Day (*Día de*

Todos los Santos), November 1st. In Mexico, however, Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) is celebrated from October 31st through November 2nd. There they remember deceased children on November 1st (*Día de los Angelitos*) and adults on November 2nd. In both countries, people flock to graveyards to honor the dead by decorating their graves with paper streamers and flowers. The marigold is a common flower choice for decorating and is called *Flor de Muerto* (flower of the dead). In Guatemala kites are constructed and flown in order to send messages to the dead.

As in all cultures, food plays a central role in the celebration. Mexicans delight in confections such as *Pan de Muerto* (bread of the dead) and sugar skulls, while Guatemalans enjoy a hearty meal of *fiambre*— a dish of meats and pickled vegetables. These foods are eaten by the living but are also shared as offerings to the deceased by leaving them at their graves or in alters in the home. *What are your employees' customs? Ask to find out!*

NWNY Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team

Serving Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates Counties.

Check out our website!
www.nwnyteam.org



Stay tuned for the next issue of El Sostento in December!

Through educational programs and other teaching opportunities, the **NWNY Team** seeks to build producers' capacities to:

- Enhance the sustainability of their businesses
- Enhance profitability and other aspects of economic performance of their businesses
- Practice environmental stewardship
- Enhance employee well-being and satisfaction
- Provide safe, healthy agricultural products in ways that are safe to farm owners and employees and their families and neighbors
- Provide leadership for enhancing relationships between the agricultural sector and the general public

We look forward to working with you in your farming and ag-related ventures in NWNY. Together we can keep the agricultural economy competitive, maintain a comfortable standard of living and be conscientious stewards of our natural environment.

Newsletter Editor: Libby Gaige
Phone: 607-793-4847
E-mail: geg24@cornell.edu