

# Tip of the Month – December 2018

**Use the good qualities of your machine.**

Currently, there are 6 to 7 milking robot brands on the market. And guess what, they all can milk cows.

Experts however, claim that each robot has its strengths. All brands have their good and less good points.

Do you leverage the strengths of your milking robot ? You paid for it! Consult your advisor to what extent you can use the strengths.

And if you focus on automatic milking: can you objectively choose which strengths of a brand are best for you and your company?

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# Tip of the Month – November 2018

**Daylight in the stall.**

In nature, cows mated during summer and were calving next spring. This is when grass is at its best for optimal milkproduction and so for the growth of their calves.

This is what the cow is used to, so she is evolved.

That is why it is important to simulate for the milking cows the “May-Situation” year-round through mimicking daylight hours in de stall and give them the best, fresch, tasty “May-quality” feed.

In terms of light in the barn: dairy cows need about 16 hours daylight while dry cows and highly pregnant heifers should have only 8-12 hours a day. The former simulates the summer while the latter represents the winter setting.

Young cattle also need 16 hours a day for growing and to be more fertile!

A good check of what is good daylight is: "Can you read your newspaper in the entire barn?"

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## Tip of the Month – October 2018

### **How much concentrate fed per milking robot visit.**

How much concentrate may a cow receive per visit to the VMS?

That depends on what more is being fed. For example, when the cow steps out of the VMS, does she then immediately get a ration with lots of concentrate-like by-products?

If this is a high basic ration we have to look out for rumen acidification. A gift of 2 kg or better less, per visit should be the maximum.

However, if you only feed roughage with a lot of flavor (good intake) at the feeding fence what has also good structure value, then the cows can get 3 kg or even more per VMS visit.

You can change this setting under "Unit".

If you set a higher concentrate feed rate than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  kg per visit, remember that there should always be good and

sufficient feed in front of the feeding fence. A cow shouldn't eat 3 kg of concentrate on an empty stomach ...

With larger rations of concentrated food per visit, we should also pay extra attention to whether or not the cow gets enough time to eat it during her visit. So, the dosing speed per VMS and per cow also plays an important role. (See Tip of the Month – May 2014)

With a 6 minute visit to the VMS, a dosing speed of 400 grams per minute is at most 2.4kg. In practice not many cows can eat more than 2 kg per visit.

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## Tip of the Month – September 2018

### When inseminating?

Early insemination has pros and cons: Fresh, fit, cows are at an advantage with a milking robot, these cows are milked oftener, and therefore give more milk. On the other hand, every calving also gives health risks for the cow. So if your company has a lactation graph with a long peak, or over many days, then a short calving interval is less interesting than when your cows are peaking after 40 days (for example) and then quickly decrease in production.

Look at your business cows lactation curve on how many days your cows have the highest production and how long their peak production lasts.

Look at the Herd graph (the one with all those dots).

After 50 DIL the cows are marked red, is there a good excuse not to inseminate this cow?

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# Tip of the Month – August 2018

## Is grazing cows while having milking robots an disadvantage?

Maybe, after all, always cows have to be milked all day long. But as the great soccer player Johan Cruyff once said: “Every disadvantage has its advantage” which is also clear with milking and grazing with milking robots, especially when it’s as hot as it is.

In nature, the cow ate before and during sunrise, filling up its rumen and then, sheltered on a safe place, e.g. under the shade of the trees ruminating the harvested grass.

At sundown, the cow did the same and then ruminated while being sheltered, to escape the wild animals. In the evening the grass is the tastiest and the cow eats the most, in the morning the grass with dew is slightly less tasty and sweet.

With this behavior, she produced enough milk for her calf and enough energy to maintain herself.

But nowadays the cow has to give 4 to 5 times as much milk as before.

**The advantage:** this natural behavior can be perfectly imitated with robotic milking!

At non-robotic farms, the most productive grazing times are often the milking times....

Adjust the times at the selection gate to a time before sunrise. So in the spring, that would be around 6 am. During the longest day and/or during warm weather adjust the time so that the first cows can go outside again at 4 am! If it is getting warm again, instead of 1 pm, start feeding the cows in the barn earlier: for example, 10 am/11 am since that is now

the sheltered, cool and safe place.

The barn must, of course, have fresh air.

And then you can perform the cow-control job.

The same goes for the evening, send the cows outside after the heat, usually after 4 pm but in the high-summer head towards sending them outside at 5-6 pm, and once it gets dark place new feed at the trough or adjust the existing feed (with some noise ☐ ).

Always adjust feed quantities and protein supplementation with the amount of grass they can eat.

With the heat and drought this year, the grass intake will not be much but the number of hours pleasant outside is more important.

This way, you still get a lot of feed in the cow while having the minimal effect of the warmth so that the production and stamina stay consistent