Western Dairy News is a collaborative effort of Dairy Specialists from:

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Stewart et al. (2002) reported a 10.2 to 15.6 second reduction in milking time per cow when automatic cluster removal settings were increased. Average milk flow per minute increased 0.11 to 0.42 lb/minute, and milk production was not negatively impacted – thus suggesting that increasing automatic cluster remover settings represents an opportunity to increase parlor performance.

Although often a challenge for large dairies, it is necessary to forestrip milk from teats to detect clinical mastitis. Some dairies have chosen to strip cows intermittently (once a week or as needed) with a herdsperson or lead milker. Others have chosen to forestrip two groups of cows per day, thus on a dairy with 10 pens all cows would be forestripped at least once every five days. If 0.5% of a herd has clinical mastitis, which means, in a herd with 1,000 cows milked three times per day it would be necessary to forestrip 12,000 teats to detect one new case of mastitis (W. Nelson Philpot, Ph.D., professor emeritus Louisiana State University, and President of Philpot and Associates International, Inc.).

By identifying the mastitis causing microorganism(s) your cows are infected with (by taking samples to a proven milk quality laboratory) you can improve prevention and treatment. In addition, laboratories can expose other problems such as cows not being sanitized properly during milking, cows being milked wet, poor maternity housing/bedding management, or heifers calving with mastitis. When taking milk samples from cows it is important to: 1) minimize sample contamination during collection; 2) use a proven milk quality lab with an acceptable turn around time; 3) effectively communicating the information between employees and management; and 4) effectively utilizing the information to improve mastitis control and overall milk quality. Routine sampling of fresh cows and clinical cows in addition to bulk tank milk samples is warranted.