

# Low Cost Parlors and Automatic Milking Systems Education Program

## A.S. Leaflet R2879

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### Summary and Implications

Same day surveys of 17 on-farm tour and workshops (580 attendees) show very significant increases (~90%) in knowledge in areas of: Cost of Low Cost Parlor versus Other Milking Systems; Ergonomics of Low Cost Milking Parlors; Design Parameters of Low Cost Milking Parlors; and Labor Efficiency of Low Cost Milking Parlors. Post surveys of the Automatic milking systems (AMS) workshops also showed very significant increases in knowledge (>130%) of the Economics of AMS systems. 91% replied the workshops were of high value to them.

16 producers who received an individual farm visit follow-up responded to a post survey. 82% responded yes that as a result of Extension's promotion, fact sheets, seminars, workshops, farm tours and/or individual consultation, they have made a decision to install (or not install) a low cost parlor or a robotic milking system. 46% have already installed; 33% are presently installing; and 21% will install in the future. 6 installed a robotic milking system; 8 installed a low cost parlor; and 3 installed an "other type" of milking system change. 7 producers felt the individual farm visits were worth an average of \$49,549 due to profits realized from making changes to their operation.

### Needs Identification

The ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team recognized a high need and interest to better understand various milking system options to reduce risk for the future of their dairy operations. This was recognized and aided by a grant funded by Risk Management Education Center. Making milking easier and safer while assisting producers balance cost effectiveness and quality of life are deemed important by the dairy industry.

### Programmatic Response

The ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team, aided by a grant, reached every dairy producer in the State of Iowa, and many outside the state with educational newsletters, factsheets and promotional materials to help increase knowledge to make more profitable decisions on their future milking system. A survey of current users of Automatic Milking Systems (AMS) and Low Cost Parlors (LCP) was done. An educational publication and an economic decision-making spreadsheet were written for both the AMS and LCP systems. Over 300 producers, along with many

industry personnel attended the series of 17 on-farm workshops with another 200 producers exposed to it through ISUEO Dairy Days programs. Another 200 dairy industry people were reached through webinars with an additional 120 contacts made through Extension websites. 45 producers received individual on-farm visits to assess how to incorporate the AMS or LCP on their dairy operations.

### Outcome Indicators

Same day surveys of the farm tour and workshops show very significant increases (~90%) in knowledge in areas of: Cost of Low Cost Parlor versus Other Milking Systems; Ergonomics of Low Cost Milking Parlors; Design Parameters of Low Cost Milking Parlors; and Labor Efficiency of Low Cost Milking Parlors. In addition, 15 producers responded that the tours were of high economic value to them. Post surveys of the AMS tours also showed very significant increases in knowledge (>130%) of the Economics of AMS systems. 91% of the respondents replied the tours were of high value to them. When asked for comments of the tours, the following responses were offered: The instruction was professional and accurate; general knowledge; seeing it and new ideas; seeing the different kinds of robots; cow comfort in freestalls; the ability to talk with dealers; facilities; it was all great; Q&A with AMS producer; and the detailed financial information.

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One producer commented: The ISU Extension Dairy Team helped us determine our potential profitability and layout design of the robotic milking system. We are in the process of installing robotic milkers on the farm and have used the labor, milk production and other economic factors to assist in our decision-making process.

### Acknowledgments

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