



# Trend of small teats causing poor milking performance

Rhian Price

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Tom Greenham at Advance Milking, a vet-led company specialising in udder health and milking, said a high proportion of Holsteins in high-yielding herds had small teats that struggled to engage correctly with the liner of clusters when milking.

“We are finding that a lot of teats, particularly on heifers, are so short that they are barely engaging with the barrel of the liner. The teat doesn’t even contact the liner in smaller Holstein heifers.”

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He said that in many situations milking was so uncomfortable for these animals that they were kicking off machines and had swollen teats.

North American genetics have gone down this route to improve milk flow, but in the UK he said farmers were entering a period where cow genetics was ahead of liner technology.

“We want short teats because that means shorter milking through improved milk flow, but this has been taken to the nth degree. It’s difficult to see how liners can keep up if we continue,” he said.

“There are liners available with dimensions that are suitable for the majority of cows we have but no one is paying attention to smaller liners.”

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He said farmers who were experiencing problems could import liners from the US where smaller ones were available.

“Don’t just look within the UK to source liners. Dealers will be able to get liners imported,” he advised.

## Breeding

Genetics consultant Rob Braithwaite at World Wide Sires advised farmers to avoid selecting bulls that had large minuses for teats.

He also warned against selecting sires too extreme for somatic cell count (SCC).

“When you start getting towards -25-30 you really

need to take notice of the milking speed. The canal teat is so tight it won't allow infections in, but it reduces milking speed."

He said the whole industry had done too good a job of making teats smaller, but there was now a focus on maintaining or improving teat length on the whole.

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