

# Udderly EZ milker adapted for cows and heifers

BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

**A** tool originally developed to help producers milk sheep, goats and mares has been adapted to make it easier for cattle producers to collect colostrum and milk from beef and dairy cattle.

The Udderly EZ Milker, is a simple hand-held trigger operated pump that fits over a teat of a cow or heifer. A few pulls on the trigger creates a vacuum in the bottle beneath the pump, and milk flows from the teat, quickly filling the bottle. Once you get the hang of it, you can fill a quart bottle with colostrum in less than a minute.

EZ Milker inventor, Buck Wheeler of Ellendale, Minnesota who modified the hand pump to be used with cattle, says it is a useful tool for collecting colostrum or milk for newborn calves.

It's quicker than milking the teat by hand, trying to hold a container underneath to catch the milk, he points out and also safer, since you can reach under the cow with one hand (holding the pump) instead of having to bend down under there to use both hands. A timid heifer, for instance, may not want to stand still very long, and even if you have her in a head catcher, this makes it quicker and easier to milk her, with less stress on her and you, and less risk of being kicked.

You first need to make sure the teat is working (give it a squeeze once by hand to make sure the wax plug is out and colostrum can flow), wipe the teat with a damp cloth if available, to make sure the teat is clean, and then insert the teat into the flanged tube above the pump. Wheeler says moistening the teat also helps make sure the flange seats securely, to create a vacuum. A dry teat may not make a good seal. If you don't have a damp cloth at hand, even moistening the teat with the colostrum you've squirted out (when you make sure the teat is working) will work.

"If you squirt a little colostrum or milk out of the teat first, to make sure it's working, this also clears any bacteria that might have been on the end of the teat," says Wheeler. "What you get in the bottle is then perfectly clean milk. It is even cleaner than if the calf was sucking itself, because it's not nursing on a dirty udder.

"If you feed the colostrum to the newborn calf, it won't pick up bacteria like he would when blundering around sucking on the cow's flank or leg in his first efforts to find a teat. Thus he gains antibodies to protect him from scours BEFORE the pathogens get into his gut. It's always a race between the pathogens and the antibodies, and this way you get the antibodies into his gut first."

When using the EZ Milker, Wheeler recommends slipping it over the teat and then push the tool up to nudge the udder, to simulate how a calf will bunt the udder to stimulate milk flow. Push the EZ Milker up first tight against the udder, and then let it settle down over the teat.

He also suggests holding the pump/bottle at a slight angle after you seat it onto the teat, tipping it away from your pumping hand. "This helps make sure you don't break the seal if the heifer tries to

kick," says Wheeler. "The instant you rock back on the pump it will break the vacuum and you'd be sitting there pumping air."

EZ milkers can be ordered with bottle sizes ranging from eight ounce, to a pint or a quart (about a litre). The bottles snap onto the pump. When a bottle is full, you just unsnap it and put a nipple on it to feed the calf, or you can freeze the colostrum or milk for later use. Nursing nipples, made in Germany, come with the milk pump. "This is a specially designed nipple that has an extra hole, like a mare's teat," he says. "You don't get an air vacuum lock in the bottle when you're feeding the calf, like you do with a regular calf nipple."

The milker comes with two different size flanges to fit large or small teats. Wheeler also provides a rubber insert that fits into the

flange, to accommodate the longer teats of a cow. The insert keeps the teat from being sucked down too far into the milker.

"When you order an EZ milker for use on a cow, we include the inserts (two sizes) that go into the flanges," he says. "If the teat is long and goes too far into the flange tube, below the vacuum hole for the pump, it wouldn't work properly, so the insert keeps the teat from being sucked that far into the tube.

Wheeler notes while there is an insert to accommodate the longer teats of a cow, there are other inserts to accommodate the shorter teats of sheep and goats. The set of inserts costs \$12.50. "The inserts makes the pump completely versatile, for any size teat you might need to milk (mare, ewe, goat, cow)," says Wheeler.



Using one hand to milk a skiddish heifer or cow is safer and easier.

"For cows, we send two quart bottles, but the pint bottles and 8 ounce bottles are also available. The filled bottles can be put in the freezer for later use. All you have to do is thaw the bottle for a newborn that needs colostrum." Extra bottles can be ordered.

Wheeler also stocks parts for pump repairs. "The only part that seems to break are the little

clips that hold the bottle onto the pump," he says. "This can happen if you leave the pump outside in very cold weather. The plastic becomes brittle and it may snap. In cold weather it is best to store the pump where it is above freezing."

For more information, call Wheeler at 507-256-7366 or check the website at [www.udderlyez.com](http://www.udderlyez.com).

