

Robotic Milking Herds

GREAT Nutrition Tips

When it comes to feeding robotic herds, the when and how of delivering nutrients is crucial for success. To ensure you're setting a strong nutritional foundation remember the acronym GREAT.



GOALS – Identify goals and measurement up front. Whether maximizing production or minimizing fetch cows, different goals require different nutritional strategies. If your goal is to maximize milk per cow, aim for 55 cows per robot at most, with at least 2.7 visits per cow per day. If your goal is to optimize milk per robot, aim for 60 to 62 cows per robot, with 2.2 visits per day as the goal. You'll get a little less milk per cow, but more total milk and more milk per robot.

ROBOT – To dispense the proper amount of feed to each cow the robot must be properly calibrated. If this is not done, the actual amount of feed dispensed will not meet that which is programmed. Routine maintenance and calibration checks will help ensure the robot is dispensing the proper amount of feed. If there are any signs of production or health issues, check the calibrations right away to be sure the cow is actually receiving the correct amount of feed.

ENERGY – Barn design and cow flow have a significant impact on the feeding program, and ultimately designate where and when cows consume most of the energy from the ration. Balancing the amount and type of energy provided at the feed bunk and the milking station is crucial to success.

ADJUST – Monitor performance and adjust the nutritional strategy with your Cargill representative to meet the shifting needs of the herd. There are many data points a robot can monitor, and the 'Rest Feed' is a key performance indicator that can help measure the success of the ration at the milking station.

THINK – Be strategic about homegrown forages – There are many factors to consider when deciding which forages to grow on farm, but the ultimate driver should be ensuring they provide the cows with the nutrients they require to maintain health and productivity. Your nutritionist can help you analyze the different types of ingredients that can be consumed in the PMR, and at the robot, and the quantities of each that can be consumed at beneficial levels.

Work closely with your Cargill Dairy Focus Consultant to maximize your investment in robotic milking equipment through tailored nutrition.

Visit [CargillDairyDreams.com/roboticmilking](https://www.CargillDairyDreams.com/roboticmilking) for more management resources.



Handling Cattle Around Robotic Milkers

By: Steve Halahan

Safety is a priority in the work we do, and we share that with everyone we cross paths with on a given day. Much has been written about handling cows on their way to the parlor and in the holding area, but less information is available on ways to stay safe on robotic milking dairies. Milking cows with robots presents some unique challenges in cow movement, and these are several principles I encourage my customers to keep in mind.

Everything starts with cow flow. Cows all come in one way and they all exit one way. It is important that those working in the robot area know the general flow of the animals, so that they don't cause stress on the cows being milked. The only way cows can exit the holding area (not the robot itself) is if they're successfully milked. Keeping the correct flow will keep animals calm. Remember, cows are coming to the robot on their own so to cause a stressful environment decreases visits and ultimately profit. The free-flow system was specifically designed for a hands-off approach and many dairymen have commented to me that the cows "seem to do better when we are either out of the barn or away for an extended period of time."

You're still working with cows. All the principles for safely handling animals applies to cows in a robotic milking environment. Remember these three tips:

1. The calmer you are, the calmer the cows will be. Do not scream, yell or push cows hard. Remaining calm, and walking slow, will help the cattle also remain calm.
2. Wear boots and/or footwear with good traction. Slipping, tripping and falling are at a higher risk in the robot milking area because of non-rubber and uneven surfaces.
3. Remain visible. While you do not want to cause a stir amongst the cows, remaining visible can help others see you better if an issue does occur.



Work closely with your Cargill Dairy Focus Consultant to maximize your investment in robotic milking equipment through tailored nutrition.

Visit [CargillDairyDreams.com/roboticmilking](https://www.CargillDairyDreams.com/roboticmilking) for more management resources.

