

Pre-owned Milking Parlors - Opportunity or Big Mistake? G 89

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A secondhand milking parlor can be an economic way to easier milking, or it can be a big mistake.

Components from a pre-owned milking parlor can provide the basis of your first milking parlor or a way to upgrade an existing parlor. The following points will help you make a wise decision on whether to buy a secondhand parlor for your dairy operation. Find pre-owned equipment at farm sales, advertisements in farm papers, from milking equipment dealers, or by word of mouth from people who visit farms, such as service people, veterinarians, or truck drivers. If possible, talk to others who have purchased and reassembled a pre-owned parlor.

Organizing Your Needs

What is your situation?

First time parlor?

Improving, adding on, or renovating an existing parlor?

How many cows will be milked? - Immediately, 5 years, 10 years?

Parlor is for operator health needs, not part of a major expansion.

How do you plan to use a milking parlor?

Use five to ten years and abandon (retire, build whole new setup elsewhere...).

First step in a major expansion at existing site.

Not sure - always thought a parlor would be nice.

What secondhand components are you looking for or willing to use on your farm?

Hardware - stalls, fronts, entrance and exit gates, indexing, crowd gate.

Gate automation equipment, air cylinders, control panels.

Milk handling equipment - pipelines, milk pumps, receiver, in-line cooling.

Milking equipment - milking units, pulsation systems, meters, weigh jars, automatic takeoffs.

Auto cow ID.

Operator comfort—lighting, heating, ventilation.

Considering Your Inputs and Resources

Non-monetary resources?

Your interest and time to tackle removal and installation of milking parlor.

Labor - yours, other workers, family members, or neighbors.

Skills and tools - welding, carpentry, flat concrete work, masonry, electrical, plumbing.

Other farm activities you will give up or decrease attention to during construction?

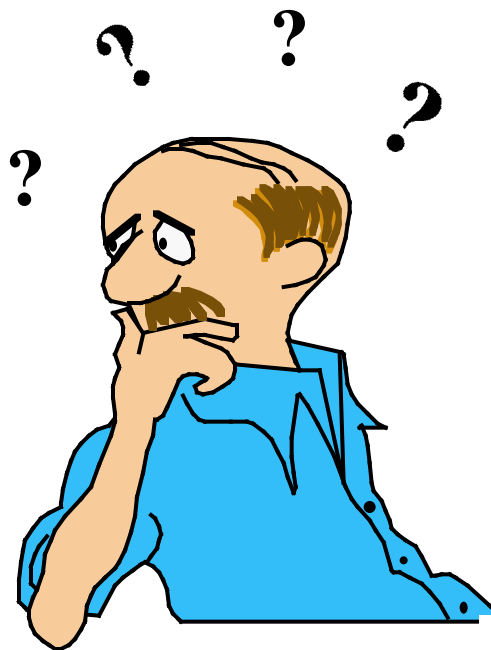
Breeding, feeding, milking, crops?

Is someone else available and able to take over these activities?

Is specialized help available?

Do you have a milking equipment installer who is willing to provide expertise and/or specialized tools you need to complete installation?

Are you prepared to pay a fair price to gain his expertise and tools?



Evaluating Potential Equipment

Determining a realistic value for a secondhand parlor and estimating the total cost for relocation is difficult. Many times a barebones new parlor may not cost much more than the total cost of utilizing a secondhand parlor. In addition to the expected life of a pre-owned parlor, can new features that may not have been available when it was first installed be added? Items to consider when evaluating cost and suitability of a secondhand parlor include:

Hardware

- Size of stall (for large cows avoid any herringbones that are smaller than 44")
- Condition of metal parts - corrosion, bent/broken, repairable
- Components imbedded in concrete - can they be retrieved or replaced
- Dimension of floor to ceiling components
- Ease of disassembly and reassembly - bolts, clamps, and welds
- Ease of modification to meet your needs
- Parts availability
- Installation prints and directions

Milking system components

- System will meet present Grade A requirements
- Appropriate size for your needs
- Parts availability
- Instruction manuals available

Dismantling and Moving

Before disassembly - gather all available information.

- Start a notebook or expanding multi-pocket file to organize materials, photographs, and notes.
- Manufacturer's name, model number, dealer.
- Obtain all operator manuals, installation drawings, sales literature.
- Take lots of pictures showing relationship of parts to each other and to floor, walls, and ceiling. Color photographs and video are both useful. Be sure still camera and/or video camera is working. Narrate video tape as you film, indicating part you are looking at and anything special you notice.
- Remember to look up at ceiling attachment details and behind at details between equipment and walls.
- Draw floor plan and dimension where all posts, etc. intersect with floor or ceiling.
- Draw elevation cross sections and dimension heights of rails, gate hinges, attachments to walls.

During disassembly

- Have a kit of marking pens/paint, tags, masking or duct tape, notebook, and camera to assure that you can mark parts and keep notes during disassembly.
- Develop code using colors, symbols, and/or words to label parts as they are disassembled.
- Make a list during disassembly of parts or components that may need repair or replacement.
- Utilize the same team for disassembly and reassembly when possible.
- If possible, reassemble the parlor immediately after you move it.
- Disassemble only enough to allow convenient size and weight assemblies to facilitate handling.

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