The quality of milk produced is a concern of all dairy producers. However, the practices used or followed on the farm to produce high quality milk sometimes do not get reviewed and updated as often as needed. Dairy Herd Management magazine published in June 2004 the results of a survey it conducted of the various milk quality practices used by its readers. The questions asked and the responses received are reprinted below with the permission of the magazine.

1. Do you believe the U.S. should adopt a 400,000 somatic cell count standard to replace the 750,000 standard currently in place? Yes: 65.9% No: 43.1%

2. What is your udder preparation procedure? Please mark all appropriate answers:
   Wiping: 88.3% Post-dipping: 85.7% Pre-dipping: 81.8% Fore-stripping: 72.7%

3. How often do you check somatic cell counts?
   Daily: 38.5% Weekly: 26.9% Twice per week: 11.5% Monthly: 11.5%
   Quarterly: 3.8% Never: 7.7%

4. Where do you get your somatic cell count measurements?
   DHIA: 52.8% Creamery/processor: 47.2% Cooperative: 27.8% On-farm parlor management system: 11.1% Other (cmt, milk company, etc.): 8.3%

5. Do you provide Milk Quality and somatic cell count feedback to your employees?
   Yes: 81.2% No: 18.8%

6. When you find a substantial rise in somatic cell count, which do you do?
   Check more thoroughly for mastitis: 76%
   Check milking equipment: 62%
   Discuss with milkers to help identify the problem: 60%
   Check pre- and/or post-milking teat dipping and effectiveness: 52%
   Bring your management team together: 36%
   Call your veterinarian to investigate the problem: 22%
   Ignore it and hope it goes away: 8%

7. What type of mastitis and milk quality training tools do you use?
   Magazine articles: 64.7% Mentoring by an experienced milker/manager: 52.9%
   Internet: 52.9% Outside consultant: 29.4% Video tapes: 17.6% Brochures: 17.6%
   None: 17.6% Posters: 11.8%

8. What percentage of your employees require training tools translated into Spanish?
   0-15 percent: 54.4%
   61-75 percent: 18.2%
   76-90 percent: 18.2%
40-60 percent: 9.1%

9. How frequently do you perform regular maintenance and service on your milking equipment? Monthly: 29.5% Quarterly: 27.3% Weekly: 25% Annually: 11.4% Less often: 6.8% Daily: 4.5%

As a producer, how would you have answered the questions? How do your milk quality practices compare with those found in the survey? What practices should you implement or modify to support your goal of producing the highest quality milk possible? Contact your extension dairy or agriculture agent, veterinarian, milk handler fieldman, or other competent consultant to discuss how you can do the best job possible of producing high quality milk.