



## Understanding the Opportunities and Risks Associated with Alternative Milking Strategies

The enclosed survey is being mailed to dairy producers in the northeastern U.S. to help us learn more about the current interest and use of alternative milking strategies (i.e. once-a-day or other flexible milking schedules, robotic milking, or seasonal milking) on farms AND to help identify areas of research and outreach critical to helping farmers successfully evaluate and implement these strategies on their own farms. The information contained in this survey will be kept anonymous outside of the research team. Answering this survey is completely voluntary; you may skip any questions you wish not to answer or stop the survey at any time. The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please return the survey in the pre-paid and addressed envelope provided.

For more information or if you have questions about this survey please contact Sara Ziegler at [sara.ziegler@uvm.edu](mailto:sara.ziegler@uvm.edu) or (802) 524-6501. **Thank you!**

**For the purposes of this survey, an “alternative milking strategy” refers to seasonal milk production, robotic milking, or using a milking frequency other than twice a day.**

### PART 1: ABOUT YOU AND YOUR FARM

1. Where is your farm located? Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you identify as part of the plain community? (Circle one) Yes No Prefer not to answer

3. How many years have you been dairy farming? \_\_\_\_\_

4. How is your dairy farm managed? (Circle one)

conventional	certified organic	organic, not certified	certified grass-fed	grass-fed, not certified
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### PART 2: ABOUT YOUR HERD AND MILKING STRATEGIES

5. On average, how large is your milking herd? Number of cows: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What breed predominantly makes up your herd? (Circle one)

Crossbred	Holstein	Jersey	Other breed (tell us below)
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7. What is your average annual milk production per cow? \_\_\_\_\_ lbs/cow

8. Where do you milk your cows? (Circle one)

Tie stall	Parlor	Robot
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9. Complete the following table by checking the box that corresponds to your milking frequency each month of the year.

Farms with robotic milking systems where cows are able to be milked at any time can skip this question and proceed to **questions 25-29 to complete the survey** [question 10](#).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Once per day												
Twice per day												
Three times in two days												
Not milking												

10. Are you interested in adopting an alternative milking strategy? (Check one)

- No or I'm not sure (proceed to questions 11-13 in Box 1)
- I've tried or am currently using an alternative strategy (proceed to questions 14-17 in Box 2)
- Yes I'm interested (proceed to questions 18-20 in Box 3)

**Box 1:** Complete the questions in this box if you answered: *No or I'm not sure* in question 10

11. What are you concerned or unsure about with adopting an alternative strategy? (Check all that apply)

- I don't understand what they are
- I don't understand the benefits they may provide
- I don't think/know my cows are a good fit
- I don't think/know it will be economically viable for me
- I'm worried about maintaining milk quality
- I'm worried about my cows' health
- My employees aren't interested
- Other:

12. If you could overcome these challenges, would you be interested in using the strategy? (Circle one)

- Yes                      No                      Not sure

13. What potential benefits would most interest you? (Check all that apply)

- Increased job attractiveness to potential employees
- Increased ability to participate in other income-generating ventures on or off the farm
- Decrease facilities/equipment wear and tear
- Decrease feed/pasture demand
- Other:

**Box 2:** Complete the questions in this box if you answered *I've tried or am currently using an alternative strategy* in question 10.

**14. For how long have you tried or been using any of the following strategies? (please include units i.e. months, years, etc.)**

Strategy	Duration of adoption (include units- months, years, etc.)
Once a day milking	
Three times in two days milking	
Seasonal milk production	
Other:	

**15. Did you observe any of the following changes when you adopted your alternative strategy? (Check all that apply) If yes, can you estimate by how much? (units of change i.e. lbs, %, \$, etc.)**

Changes	Yes, I observed this	Amount changed & units- lbs, %, \$, etc.
Decrease in milk production		
Increase in milk production		
Increase in cases of Mastitis		
Increases in Somatic Cell Count		
Increased cull rate		
Improved body condition		
Decreased feed intake needs		
Increased reproductive performance		
Other (describe):		

**16. What were the biggest challenges in adopting this strategy?**

Strategy	Biggest Challenge(s)
Once a day milking	
Three times in two days milking	
Seasonal milk production	
Other:	

**17. What benefits were you interested in gaining by adopting this alternative strategy? (Check all that apply)**

- Increased flexibility in daily task timing
- Increased job attractiveness to potential employees
- Increased ability to participate in other income-generating ventures on or off the farm
- Decrease facilities/equipment wear and tear
- Decrease feed/pasture demand
- Other:

**Box 3:** Complete the questions in this box if you answered *Yes I'm interested* to question 10.

**18. What challenges have prevented you from adopting an alternative strategy? (Check all that apply)**

- I'm worried about my farm's economics due to lower milk production
- I'm concerned about other issues related to economics
- I'm worried about managing milk quality
- I'm worried about my cows' health
- Other (Describe)

**19. If you could overcome these challenges, would you be interested in adopting the strategy? (Circle one)**

- Yes                      No                      Not sure

**20. What potential benefits of adopting an alternative milking strategy are you interested in? (Check all that apply)**

- Increased flexibility in daily task timing
- Increased job attractiveness to potential employees
- Increased ability to participate in other income-generating ventures on or off the farm
- Decrease facilities/equipment wear and tear
- Decrease feed/pasture demand
- Other:

Thank you for your thoughtful response. If you are interested in learning more about this project or participating in more in-depth aspects of the project, please contact Sara Ziegler at [sara.ziegler@uvm.edu](mailto:sara.ziegler@uvm.edu) or (802) 524-6501.