

# Making the Switch

How to Transition Away from Tail Docking

## Switch Trimming

Switch trimming is the best management practice a farmer can utilize to transition away from tail docking. On an individual farm basis, as with all farm practices, you should evaluate the timing and method of the procedure to ensure it meets your farm's individual needs.

### Switch Trimming Tools

	 <b>Scissors</b>	 <b>Hand Shears</b>	 <b>Clippers</b>	 <b>Tube/Hose Cutter</b>	 <b>Cordless Drill with Trimmer Attachment</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Ease of trimming</li> <li>• Readily available to purchase</li> <li>• Minimal time is required to trim a switch</li> <li>• Ease of sharpening blades</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity</li> <li>• Likely to already be present on farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Ease of trimming</li> <li>• Effectively provides full trim in 1 cut</li> <li>• Minimal time is required to trim a switch</li> <li>• Likely to already be present on farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time requirement: 3-4 seconds</li> <li>• No pre-trimming of dirt or manure out of switch</li> <li>• Minimum risk of injury to cow or operator</li> </ul>	
<b>Drawbacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for operator and/or cow injury because of blade sharpness</li> <li>• Switch hair may remain on sides of tail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clippers require more frequent maintenance</li> <li>• Clipper blades can dull with dirty switches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for operator and/or cow injury because of blade sharpness</li> <li>• Switch hair may remain on sides of tail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More expensive than other options</li> <li>• Drill and attachment require consistent maintenance</li> </ul>	

## Employee Safety

### Training

Employees should be trained to be considerate and aware of cows' full tails. Areas where additional training should be focused may include:

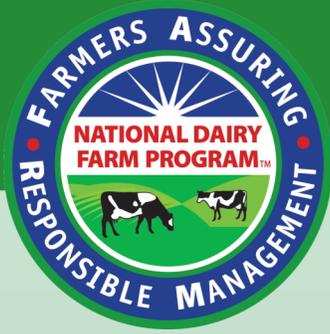
- Stall, alley, walk ways and parlor cleanliness
- Attaching milking units: tails may need to be gently moved to the side to access the udder
- Animal movement around barriers (i.e. gates with latches)

### Safety Goggles/Glasses

Eye protection is important for all employees, regardless of where they work on the farm. When working around cattle, protective eyewear will ensure protection for all employees' eyes from any foreign object, liquids etc. Benefits of safety goggles and glasses include:



- Variety of sizes and styles
- Can select for preference of style and comfort
- Inexpensive
- OSHA Compliance (29 CFR 1910.133)



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## Facility Management

High milk quality is achievable by following consistent milking procedure protocols,

Additionally, routine cleaning, raking, and scraping of manure from stalls, alley/walkways and the parlor during and/or in between each milking time will help to maintain cleanliness of animals and facilities.

Considerations and/or adaptations to parlors may need to be considered to maintain the cleanliness of animals and facilities after you transition away from tail docking.

## Milking Parlor Accommodations

			
	<b>Tail Tying</b>	<b>Gutter Guards</b>	<b>Manure Shields/Troughs</b>
<b>Use with Parlor Type:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tie Stall</li> <li>• Stanchion Barns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel</li> <li>• Herringbone</li> <li>• Tie Stall</li> <li>• Stanchion Barns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel</li> <li>• Herringbone</li> <li>• Rotary</li> </ul>
	<b>Details:</b>	Ties should be a bungee type cord that is not under tension and can be quickly released if needed to prevent injury to the cow.	By incorporating gutter guards in the platform of the parlor, manure can drop through the grates of the guard but switch hair or long tails would rest on top of the guard, hence avoiding contact with the collected manure.
	<b>Robotic Milking</b> 	For the robot to clearly identify the location of the teats, trimming of the switch of the tail is recommended. Robots are more easily able to distinguish between the tail and cow's teats when the switch is trimmed.	



The Association of Equipment Manufacturers' Milking Machine Manufacturers Council supports the importance of animal welfare and that dairy producers follow local, state and federal laws and regulations regarding bovine tail docking.