



# Udder Hygiene Tips That Won't Stress Your Cow

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## Maintaining Udder Cleanliness Without Adding Stress

Clean udders are easier to prepare for milking and are important in maintaining milk quality and udder health. One method to improve udder hygiene is removing udder hair, which can trap manure and debris and harbor bacteria that increase the risk of infection and elevated somatic cell counts. Shorter udder hair limits bacterial growth and reduces the likelihood of milk contamination.<sup>1</sup>

## Clipping: Effective but Stressful

Traditionally, dairies have used electric clippers to trim udder hair. While clipping is highly effective in removing hair, it can be very time-consuming. In addition, the noise and physical contact associated with clippers can make cows nervous, increasing their stress levels and the risk of injury to the animal and the handler.<sup>2</sup>

## Singeing: A Low-Stress Alternative

Udder hair singeing is a time-efficient and cow-friendly alternative to clipping. The process involves passing a cool-burning 3- to 4-inch propane flame across the udder to singe the hair. The entire procedure takes less than 5 seconds per cow. Cows generally remain calm during singeing because it requires no physical contact, does not cause pain when done properly, and creates minimal noise.<sup>3</sup>

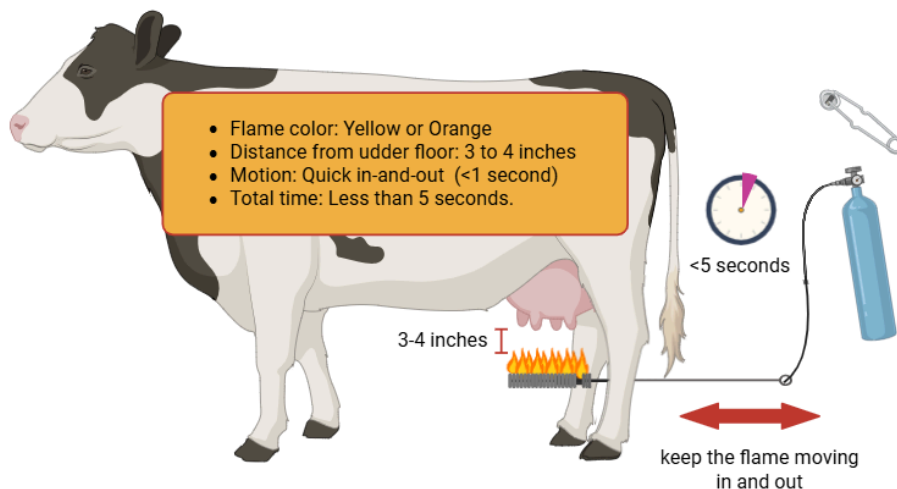


Photo credit: Carolina Pinzon

## Singeing Procedure

- Light the wand; ensure the flame is yellow or orange (indicating a cooler burn).
- Hold the wand 3 to 4 inches from the udder floor.
- Use a quick in-and-out motion lasting less than a second.
- Move the wand up the back of the rear quarters.
- The total time per cow should not exceed 5 seconds.<sup>3</sup>

Proper udder hair management using low-stress techniques like singeing can contribute to better udder hygiene, lower somatic cell counts, and calmer cows during milking.

## References

1. Ruegg PL. New Perspectives in Udder Health Management. *Vet Clin North Am Food Anim Pract.* 2012;28(2):149-163.
2. Schreiner DA, Ruegg PL. Relationship between Udder and Leg Hygiene Scores and Subclinical Mastitis. *J Dairy Sci.* 2003;86(11):3460-3465.
3. McFarland D. Udder Flaming Can Be Effective Hair Removal Tool. *Penn State Extension.* <https://extension.psu.edu/udder-flaming-can-be-effective-hair-removal-tool>. Published March 1, 2017. Accessed May 15, 2025