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## The differences in milkability, milk, and health traits in dairy cattle due to parity

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the differences in milkability, milk and health traits in Holstein and Simmental dairy cattle due to parity. Following traits were analysed: milkability (duration of milking, MT; milk yield per milking, MYM; maximal, MMF and average milk flow, AMF), milk traits (daily milk yield, DMY; daily fat content, DFC; daily protein content, DPC; daily lactose content, DLC; urea, UREA) and health traits (logarithmic somatic cell count, SCClog and teat-end hyperkeratosis, TEH). Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ) differences between parity in MYM, DMY, MMF, DPC and DLC was determined. Also, significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) difference in the teat-end hyperkeratosis score were found between cows in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> as well as between cows in 1<sup>st</sup> and  $\geq 3^{\text{rd}}$  parity. The cows in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> parity had similar SCClog, while significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) difference was found between SCClog in cows in 1<sup>st</sup> and cows in  $\geq 3^{\text{rd}}$  parity. The obtained results indicate that the parity significantly affect the milkability, milk and health traits. Since the hyperkeratosis level is highly correlated to the mastitis incidence risk, the regular teat-end scoring should be used in order to ensure quality machine milking and to minimize mastitis incidence risk.

*Key words:* parity, milk yield and composition, milkability, teat-end hyperkeratosis, somatic cell count, dairy cattle

### Introduction

Duration and characteristics of machine milking depend on the udder and teat conformation, as well as on cows' production and milkability traits. According to Interbull (1999) the health of udder is one of the most important issues in dairy cattle selection. The conformation of the udder (Rupp and Boichard, 1999; Coban et al., 2009), characteristics of the teats (Chrystal et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002; Rensing and Ruten, 2006) and the teat-end shape (Hodghson and Murdock, 1980; Lojda et al., 1982; Neijenhuis et al., 2000) affect the proper milking and risk of the mastitis. Teat-end is an

important first line of defence in protecting of the udder from the invasion of mastitis pathogens (Stádník et al., 2010). Furthermore, the changes in teat tissue due to milking may reduce the effectiveness of the teat canal barrier against infections (Neijenhuis et al., 2000). Guler et al. (2009) stated that the milkability traits as functional traits have important role in machine milking of dairy cows. The most important milkability traits are average and maximal milk flow, as well as the duration of milking (Gäde et al., 2006). In order to ensure quality milking, milking of cows needs to be fast, clean, gentle and complete. Zecconi et al. (1992) emphasized that machine milking should not cause more than 5 % of

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the thickening or thinning of the teat tissue. Furthermore, Neijenhuis (2004) stated that the mechanical forces during machine milking result in changes in teat-end tissue. One of such changes is teat-end hyperkeratosis (TEH) which means excessive keratin growth, caused by the mechanical pressure of teat cup liner, inadequate hygiene and protection of teats after milking, conformation of the udder and teats, season, microclimate condition etc. (Hillerton et al., 2000; Mein et al., 2003, Ohnstad, 2003; Mein and Reinemann, 2009). According to Neijenhuis et al. (2001) and de Pinho et al. (2012) increase of the teat-end callosity thickness or teat-end callosity roughness increases the incidence risk of clinical mastitis. The researches of Gleeson et al. (2004) and Haghkhan et al. (2011) confirmed a significant positive correlation between teat condition and somatic cell count (SCC). They also reported that injured teat had significantly higher SCC in comparison to normal teat. Furthermore, Singh et al. (2014) determined significantly higher  $SCC_{log}$  in dairy bovines with discoloured teat skin, cracked and with very rough teat ends in comparison to dairy bovines with teats with normal skin and smooth teat ends. Neijenhuis et al. (2001) and Neijenhuis (2004) emphasised that teat condition scoring could be used as a valuable and uncostly tool for milking machine optimization. Quick and proper detection of the cause of poor teat condition would reduce somatic cell counts and clinical mastitis prevalence, and consequently it will save time and treatment costs (Taylor, 2006). The objective of this study was to determine the differences in milkability, milk and health traits in Holstein and Simmental dairy cattle due to parity.

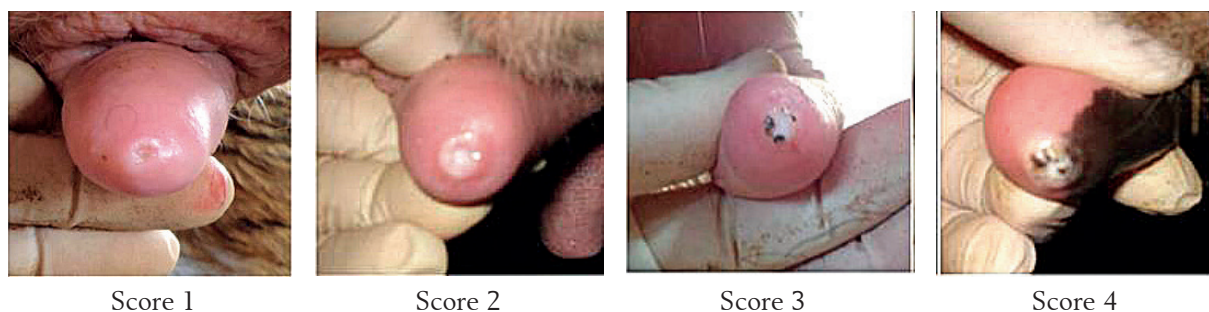
## Materials and methods

The study was performed on Holstein ( $n = 30$ ) and Simmental ( $n = 46$ ) dairy cows. The cows were milked in the milking parlour (herringbone 2x10). During milking cows were exposed to equal vacuum level (43-45 kPa) and pulsation ratio (60:40). Following groups of traits were analysed:

- milkability traits: duration of milking (MT), milk yield per milking (MYM), and maximal (MMF) and average milk flow (AMF);
- milk traits: daily milk yield (DMY), daily fat content (DFC), daily protein content (DPC), daily lactose content (DLC), urea (UREA);
- health status of traits (logarithmical transformed somatic cell count ( $SCC_{log}$ ) according Ali and Shook (1980) and Dodenhoff et al. (1999), and teat-end hyperkeratosis (TEH).

The milkability traits were measured by the Lacto-corder measuring device. The individual test day records collected in regular milk recording performed by Croatian Agriculture Agency (CAA) were used for the analysis of the milk traits and one health trait ( $SCC_{log}$ ). The evaluation of teat-end hyperkeratosis (TEH) was performed in the first 10 seconds after milking few days before regular milk recording. The evaluation was performed in accordance to Mein et al. (2001) and Britt and Farnsworth (2005) as follows (Figure 1):

- teat-end without callous (keratin ring) - score 1;
- teat-end with formed and clearly visible callous - score 2;
- teat-end with rough callous with hyperkeratosis - score 3;
- teat-end with very rough hyperkeratosis and radial cracking - score 4.



(score 1 - without callous (keratin ring); score 2 - formed and clearly visible callous; score 3 - rough callous with hyperkeratosis; score 4 - very rough hyperkeratosis and radial cracking)

Figure 1. The score for the teat-end hyperkeratosis

Logical control of milk data was performed according to ICAR standards (2003). Somatic cell count was transformed on a log scale. Statistical analysis was performed by a StatSoft Statistica 8 (2008). The effect of parity (1; 2 and  $\geq 3$ ) on the milkability, milk and health traits was determined by the One - Way ANOVA and significance of differences was tested with Fisher LSD test ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

## Results and discussion

Variability of the analysed traits is presented on Table 1. Milk yield per milking ranged from 5.15 to 21.88 kg with mean production 10.68 kg per milking, while daily milk yield ranged from 10.20 to 48.20 kg with mean daily production 23.53 kg. Higher MYM in amount of 14.14 kg and 12.40 kg were measured in research of Lee and Choudhary (2006) and Gäde et al. (2006), while the Mijić et al. (2004) determined lower MYM (8.03 kg). The minimum daily milk fat and daily protein contents were 2.02 and 2.37 %, while the maximum values were 6.08 and 4.38 %. The Simmental cows investigated by Mijić et al. (2004) had higher minimum (2.49; 2.87 %) but similar maximum (5.76; 4.41 %) values of DFC and DPC. Mean urea content was 28.61 mg/100 mL, while mean daily lactose content was 4.47 %. Mean maximal milk

flow was 3.07 kg/min, while mean average milk flow was 1.97 kg/min. Higher values for MMF and AMF comparing to this research in amount of 3.21 and 2.30 kg/min were determined by Lee and Choudhary (2006). Duration of milking ranged from 2.52 to 13.22 min, with mean value 7.73 min. Higher mean duration of milking was determined in research conducted by Davis and Reinemann (2002).

Transformed somatic cell count ( $SCC_{log}$ ) ranged from -0.64 to 5.81, with mean value at 2.80. Higher average values of  $SCC_{log}$  were determined in studies by Davis and Reinemann (2002) and Coban et al. (2009). Average score of teat-end hyperkeratosis was 1.71.

The results of variance analyses are presented in Table 2. The effect of parity on milk yield per milking and maximum milk flow was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). The cows in first parity had significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) lower milk yield per milking (9.57 kg) comparing to cows in second (12.56 kg) and third and other parities (11.80 kg). These results were consistent with the results of Tančin et al. (2006). Maximum milk flow in the first parity cow's was significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) lower (2.68 kg/min) comparing to cows in  $\geq 3$  parity (3.50 kg/min). Significant effect of parity on average milk flow, maximum milk flow and milking time was also confirmed in research of Gäde et al. (2006) and Guler et al. (2009).

Table 1. Descriptive statistic for analysed traits

	Traits	Mean	Min	Max	SD	CV	SE
Milkability	MYM, kg	10.68	5.15	21.88	4.14	38.73	0.34
	MMF, kg/min	3.07	1.15	6.57	1.15	37.35	0.09
	AMF, kg/min	1.97	0.56	3.47	0.68	34.59	0.06
	MT, min	7.73	2.52	13.22	2.86	37.05	0.23
Milk	DMY, kg/day	23.53	10.20	48.20	9.96	42.31	0.81
	DFC, %	3.72	2.02	6.08	0.85	22.83	0.07
	DPC, %	3.37	2.37	4.38	0.35	10.48	0.03
	DLC, %	4.47	3.94	4.85	0.18	4.09	0.01
Health	UREA, mg/100 mL	28.61	2.80	67.00	12.02	42.02	0.98
	$SCC_{log}$	2.80	-0.64	5.81	1.30	46.44	0.11
	TEH	1.71	1.00	4.00	0.79	46.43	0.06

MYM - milk yield per milking; MMF - maximal milk flow; AMF - average milk flow; MT - duration of milking; DMY - daily milk yield; DFC - daily fat content; DPC - daily protein content; DLC - daily lactose content; UREA - urea;  $SCC_{log}$  - somatic cell count on log scale; TEH - teat-end hyperkeratosis

The significant difference in MYM and MMF among cows in 2 and  $\geq 3$  parity was not determined. The average milk flow and duration of milking did not differ significantly in cows depending on the parity, which is different from results obtained by Gäde et al. (2006). The values of the MYM, MMF and AMF increased in successive parities which is in accordance with results determined by Roth et al. (1998) but in contrast with Naumann (2001). Cows in the first parity had significantly ( $p < 0.0001$ ) lower average daily milk yield (19.18 kg/day) comparing to cows in the 2 and  $\geq 3$  parities (32.01; 26.68 kg/day), which was confirmed in previous researches too (Aydin et al., 2008; Guler et al., 2009). Also, significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) were found in DPC and DLC. Daily protein content was higher in cows in the first parity (3.52 %) comparing to cows in the second, third and other parities (3.27 %, 3.34 %). Cows in the 1 and 2 parity had significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) higher daily lactose content (4.52 %; 4.50 %) comparing to cows in the  $\geq 3$  parities (4.39 %).

Figures 2 and 3 present the differences among the health traits (TEH and  $SCC_{log}$ ) in cows regarding the parity. The score of the teat-end hyperkeratosis is positively correlated with the parity. There is highly significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ) difference between TEH score in the cows in first and second (1.33; 1.79) parities as well as between the cows in first and third and other parities (1.33; 1.89). Neijenhuis et al.

(2001) as well as de Pinho et al. (2012) emphases that increase of teat-end callosity thickness or teat-end callosity roughness increases the incidence risk of clinical mastitis. Furthermore, Haghhkchah et al. (2011) determined significant correlation between teat condition and SCC. Same authors also reported that the cows with injured teats have significantly higher SCC in comparison to the cows with normal teats.

Somatic cell count is the most frequently used indicator of cow's health (subclinical mastitis) and milk quality in dairy cattle breeding (Tsenkova et al., 2001). Regarding the variability of the somatic cell count in this research (Figure 3), cows in first and second parities had similar  $SCC_{log}$  values, while significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) difference was found in  $SCC_{log}$  between the cows in first parity (2.49) and the cows in third and other parities (3.14).

According to Neijenhuis et al. (2004) the incidence risk (IR) of mastitis increases with parity, therefore the cows in first lactation had the lowest IR comparing to those in second and later lactations. Furthermore, Singh et al. (2014) determined significantly higher  $SCC_{log}$  (implying increased incidence risk of mastitis) in dairy bovines with cracked and very rough teat ends in comparison to dairy bovines with teats with smooth teat ends. The effects that cause changes on teat tissue are breed (Bobić et al., 2014), parity, lactation stage and teat conformation (Sieber and Farnsworth, 1981; Neijenhuis

Table 2. ANOVA results for study traits

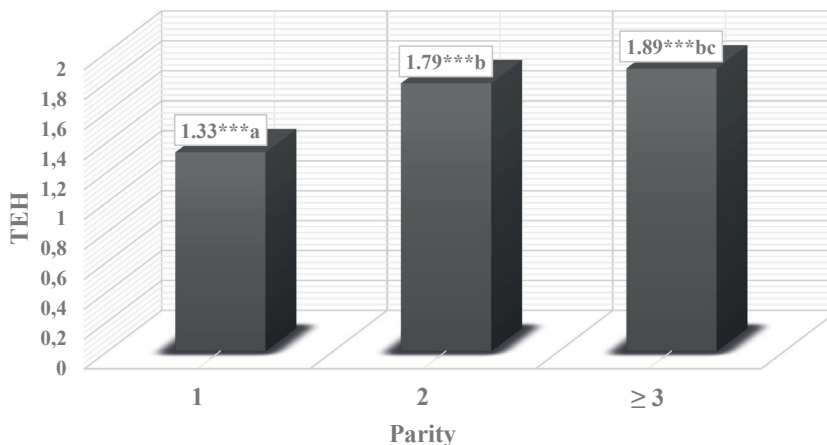
Traits	Lactation 1 (n=20)		Lactation 2 (n=21)		Lactation $\geq 3$ (n=35)		p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Milkability	MYM	9.57 <sup>a</sup>	3.15	12.56 <sup>b</sup>	4.34	11.80 <sup>bc</sup>	4.20	$p < 0.05$
	MMF	2.68 <sup>a</sup>	0.68	3.26 <sup>ab</sup>	0.96	3.50 <sup>b</sup>	1.35	$p < 0.01$
	AMF	1.77	0.50	1.88	0.70	2.14	0.73	NS
	MT	7.36	1.85	8.45	4.21	7.51	2.24	NS
Milk	DMY	19.18 <sup>a</sup>	5.48	32.01 <sup>b</sup>	10.99	26.68 <sup>c</sup>	9.40	$p < 0.0001$
	DFC	3.97	0.70	3.51	0.98	3.81	0.86	NS
	DPC	3.52 <sup>a</sup>	0.36	3.27 <sup>bc</sup>	0.32	3.34 <sup>c</sup>	0.37	$p < 0.05$
	DLC	4.52 <sup>a</sup>	0.15	4.50 <sup>ab</sup>	0.19	4.39 <sup>c</sup>	0.17	$p < 0.01$
	UREA	22.90	16.41	24.74	9.12	25.66	10.02	NS

$p < 0.05$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $p < 0.0001$  - level of significance; abc - values marked with different later are significant; NS - no significant; n - number of the animals; MYM - milk yield per milking; MMF - maximal milk flow; AMF - average milk flow; MT - duration of milking; DMY - daily milk yield; DFC - daily fat content; DPC - daily protein content, DLC - daily lactose content; UREA - urea

et al., 2000; Neijenhuis, 2004). Those changes were caused by mechanical pressure of liners and excessive vacuum during the milking (Shearn and Hillerton, 1996; Mein et al., 2003, Mein and Reinemann, 2009). With respect to the above mentioned as well as to the results of the present study, excesskeratin growth (TEH) on teat ends most probably originated from morphological changes of teats occurring due to ageing of cows and frequent repetition of milking, especially the inadequate ones (too high or too low milk flow, excess vacuum, liners of inoperative or inadequate dimensions). Simultaneously with excessive keratin growth and increase of teat-end callosity roughness, somatic cell count increases, the closing of teat canal aggravates and risk of mastitis increases.

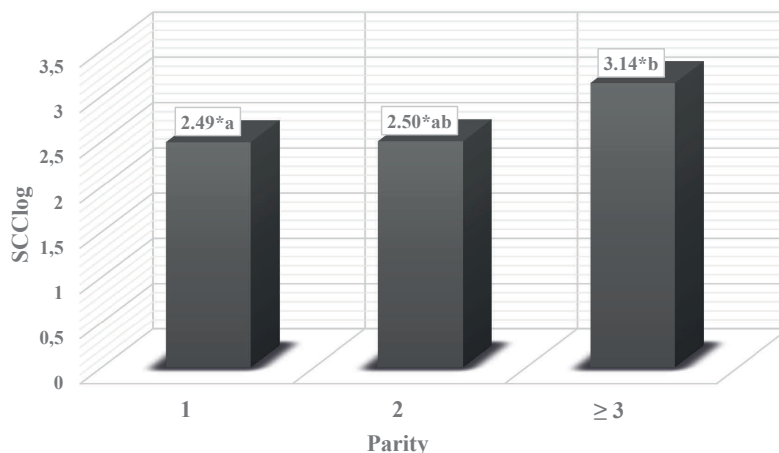
## Conclusions

For quality milking, cows need to be milked fast, cleanly, gently and completely. Furthermore, the machine milking should not cause too many changes in teat tissue. The characteristics and duration of machine milking are dependent on the udder and teat conformation, as well as on production and milkability traits of cows. The research results indicate that the parity significantly affect the milkability, milk and health traits. Also, positive relationship between the level of hyperkeratosis and parity was determined. Since the hyperkeratosis level is highly correlated to the mastitis incidence risk, the regular teat-end scoring should be used in order to ensure quality machine milking and to minimize mastitis incidence risk.



(1 - first lactation; 2 - second lactation; ≥ 3 - third and later lactations; \*\*\* $p < 0.0001$ ; abc - values marked with different later are significant; TEH - teat-end hyperkeratosis)

Figure 2. The results of the teat-end hyperkeratosis score regarding the parity



(1 - first lactation; 2 - second lactation; ≥ 3 - third and later lactations; \* $p < 0.05$ ; ab - values marked with different later are significant; SCC<sub>log</sub> - logarithmically transformed somatic cell count)

Figure 3. The results of the somatic cell count regarding the parity

*Različitosti u muznim, mliječnim i zdravstvenim svojstvima kod krava u proizvodnji mlijeka ovisno o rednom broju laktacije*

**Sažetak**

Cilj rada bio je utvrditi različitosti u muznim, mliječnim i zdravstvenim svojstvima krava simentalске i holstein pasmine ovisno o rednom broju laktacije. Analizirana su sljedeća svojstva: muzna (trajanje mužnje, MT; količina mlijeka po mužnji, MYM; maksimalni, MMF i prosječni protok mlijeka, AMF), svojstva mlijeka (dnevna količina mlijeka, DMY; dnevna količina masti, DFC; dnevna količina proteina, DPC; dnevna količina laktoze, DLC; urea, UREA) i zdravstvena svojstva (logaritmirani broj somatskih stanica,  $SCC_{log}$ ; hiperkeratoza vrhova sisa, TEH). Utvrđen je visoko signifikantan ( $p < 0,05$ ;  $p < 0,01$ ;  $p < 0,0001$ ) razlika u: MYM, DMY, MMF, DPC i DLC između svih laktacija. Također je utvrđena visoko značajna ( $p < 0,0001$ ) razlika u hiperkeratozi vrhova sisa između krava u 1. i 2., te između krava u 1. i  $\geq 3$ . laktaciji. Krave u prvoj i drugoj laktaciji imale su približno isti broj  $SCC_{log}$ , međutim značajnost ( $p < 0,05$ ) je utvrđena između  $SCC_{log}$  kod krava u prvoj i krava u trećoj i ostalim laktacijama. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da redni broj laktacije značajno utječe na muzna, svojstva mlijeka i zdravstvena svojstva. Budući da je razina hiperkeratoze jako povezana s rizikom od nastanka mastitisa, potrebno je redovito ocjenjivati vrhove sisa kako bi se osigurala kvalitetna mužnja a ujedno i smanjio rizik od nastanka mastitisa.

*Ključne riječi:* redosljed laktacije, količina i sastav mlijeka, muznost, hiperkeratoza vrhova sisa, broj somatskih stanica, krave u proizvodnji mlijeka

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