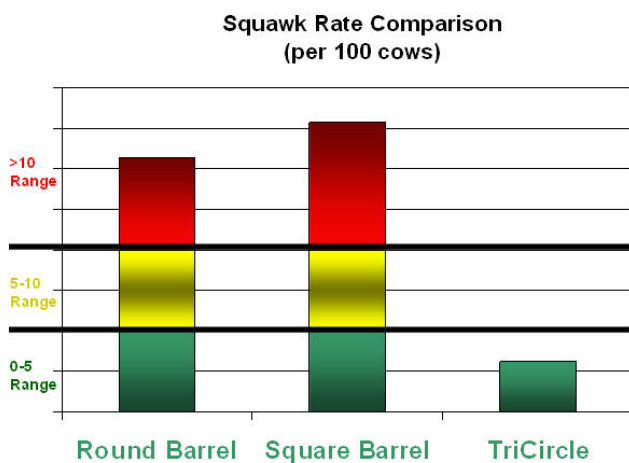


## Squawks

Recognizing a squawk in a milking parlor is not a difficult task. It is often the loudest noise coming from the parlor. The alarming fact about squawks is that they are only a fraction of the total number of liner slips that take place. Squawks are the audible result of liner slips. A liner slip is the result of sudden air admission between a liner's mouthpiece and a teat. Only an estimated 1/3 of slips are audible. This means there is a lot more going on than you are aware of. Liner slips are attributed to liner design, vacuum level, cluster alignment, or liner condition or some combination of these.

Recent trials at Lauren Dairy provided the opportunity to collect a count of squawking occurrences for different liners. The three liners studied were: Lauren Tri-Circle<sup>®</sup> Silicone Liner, an organic rubber round barreled liner, and an organic rubber square barreled liner. Each liner was set up to run at the manufacturers suggested vacuum specifications. When an audible squawk was heard, the cluster was identified and recorded. Only one count per cluster was recorded, so if more than one liner on a cluster was squawking it was only counted as one. Also, a squawk was not counted if it started right after the unit was attached. Due to the possibility of poor unit alignment, the milker was allowed to go back and realign the unit and a squawk was not counted. A squawk was counted, however, if it continued immediately following the readjustment or restarted sometime during the milking. The data was collected from approximately 195 Holsteins for each liner.

Examining the data from the perspective of squawks per 100 cow milkings shows the round barreled liner, and the square barreled liner both above 15.5 instances. The Tri-Circle<sup>®</sup> Liner was well below both of these showing only 3.1 squawks per 100 cow milkings. This data is telling us that we can expect to have a squawk rate of greater than 15.5% using either the round or square barreled liners, and a squawk rate of approximately 3% with the Tri-Circle<sup>®</sup> Liner.



It has been suggested that 5-10 squawks per 100 cow milkings is an acceptable number (Mein and Reid, 1996). This study demonstrates that a number lower than that is clearly obtainable by combining the correct vacuum with a liner designed to reduce slipping. Simply turning up your vacuum will not necessarily reduce squawks, and could have adverse effects on your cow if the liner is not designed for that vacuum level. An important point is...if you want to reduce squawks, use a product that is designed with that intent.