


CLEAN HANDS, CLEAN MILK



Wambui finds out...

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT, KENYA

DFID Department for International Development



Look how Miriam's baby lost weight after being ill with diarrhoea. It will take a long time for her to catch up and you can see that she was growing so well before her illness.

Diarrhoea is not only dangerous for a baby while it is suffering from the disease, but the bad effects will go on for a long time after.

So now you see how important it is to wash your hands after going to the toilet...



... before preparing food ...



... after working in the shamba ...



... and before handling the baby.



Skin diseases and diarrhoea are just two of the problems that your baby can get from your dirty hands. It is so easy to prevent some illnesses, all you need are two things- soap and water.

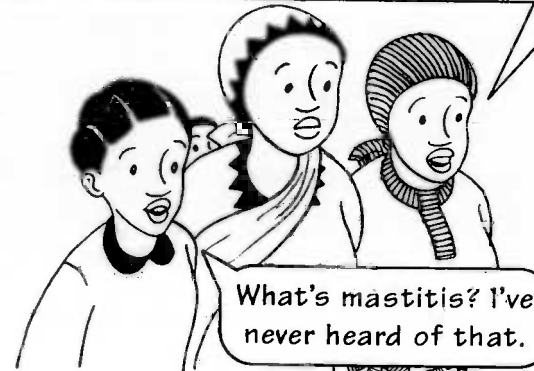
Germs on your hands could kill your baby!




That was all a bit frightening! I had never realised just how dangerous my own hands could be.



You know, when my cow had something wrong with its udder and the milk went bad, the vet from the co-op said that the cow had a disease called mastitis and that I may have spread the disease with my hands.



What's mastitis? I've never heard of that.



Oh, I hope Ngunu doesn't get that. Not now that she is doing well and giving us good milk. It would be just dreadful if the milk went bad!

Wambui, you worry too much! I've never heard of mastitis either, so it can't be important!

It was certainly serious for us when our cow's udder went hard and swollen. One of the teats eventually stopped producing milk ever since.

Well, it sounds as if we should find out more about this!

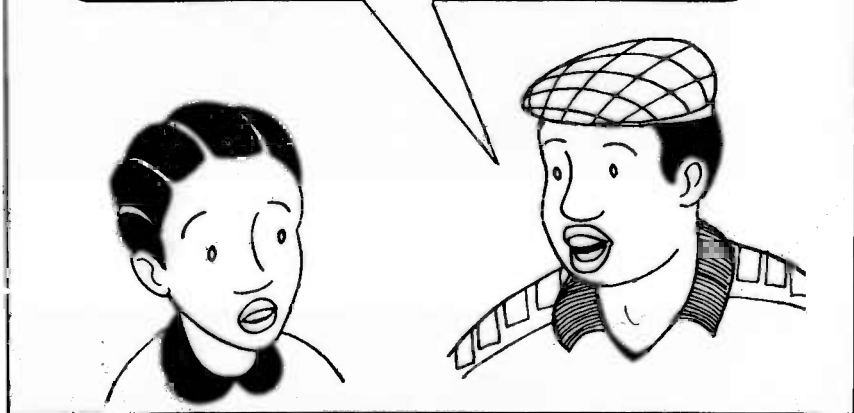
Next day Wambui sets out to find out more at the Dairy Co-op.

Yes Wambui, mastitis can be serious. Serious for the cow and for you. Less milk to drink or sell and the milk doesn't keep well either. Kamau's cow was ill with mastitis earlier this year, wasn't it Kamau?

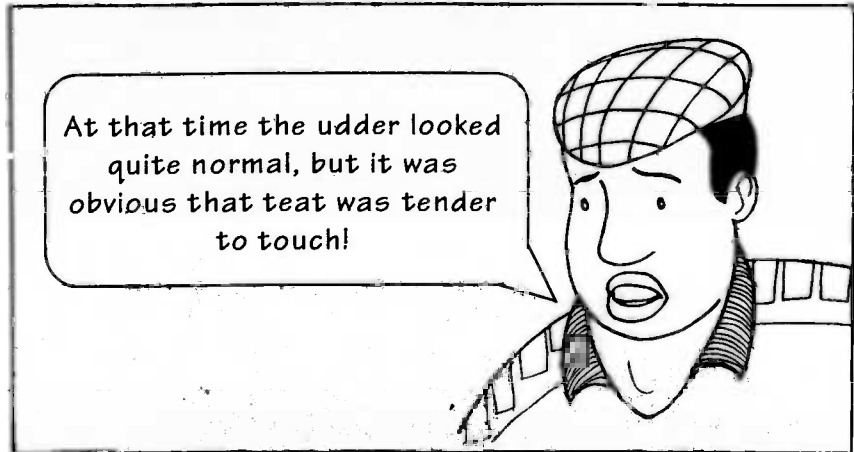
Indeed.



The first thing I noticed was that I kept getting kicked when I went to milk that last teat. Every time! touch the teat and BANG! Out goes the foot.



At that time the udder looked quite normal, but it was obvious that teat was tender to touch!



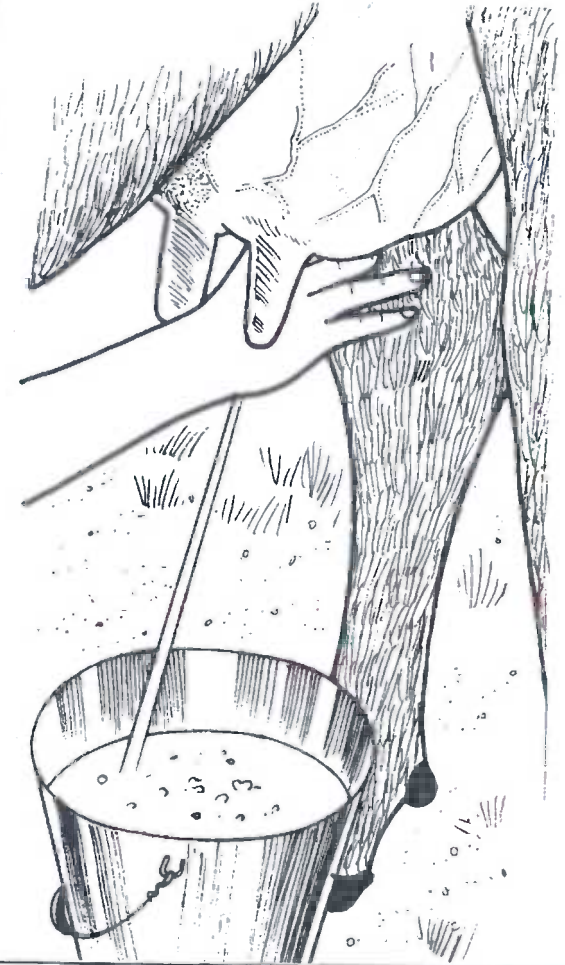
Later I noticed that the teat and the area around it, in fact that whole quarter of the udder felt warmer than the rest.

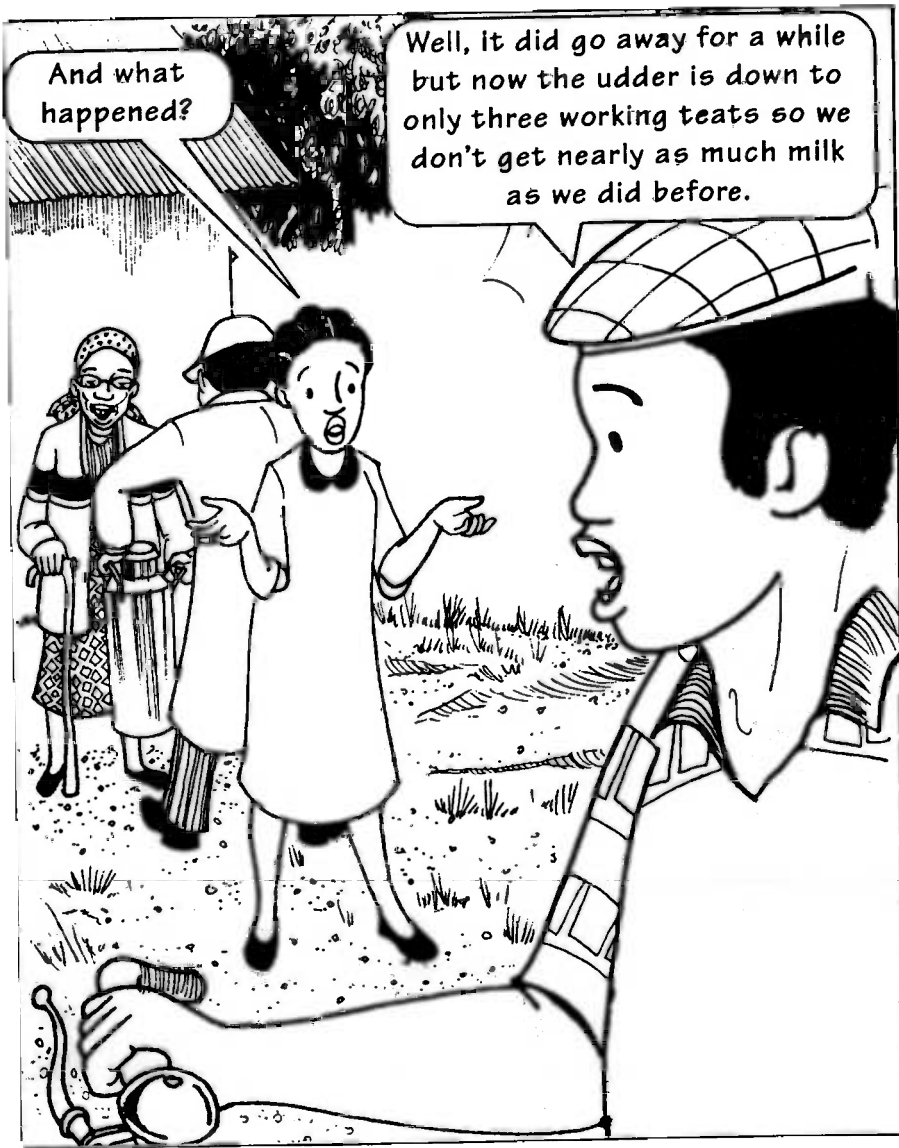


Then it started to swell up and became quite hot.



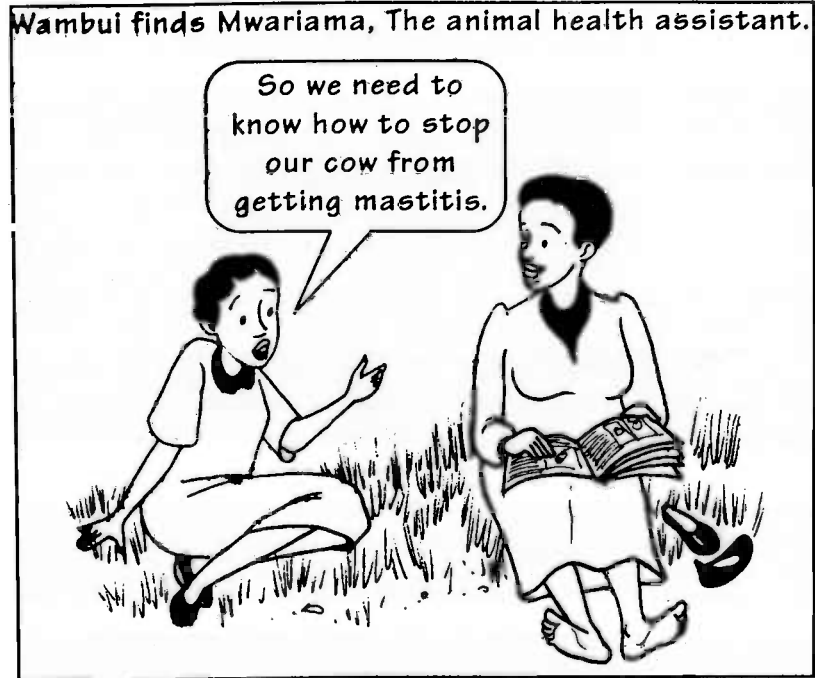
When I milked it there were little lumps in the milk eventually even a little blood. I suppose I should have got some help but I thought it would just go away...





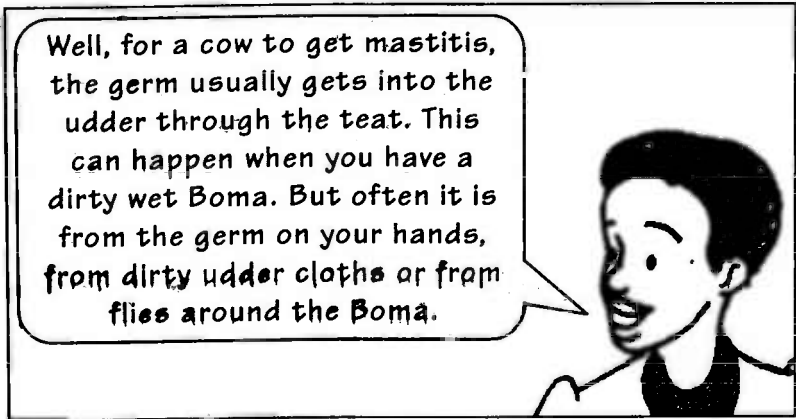
And what happened?

Well, it did go away for a while but now the udder is down to only three working teats so we don't get nearly as much milk as we did before.



Wambui finds Mwariama, The animal health assistant.

So we need to know how to stop our cow from getting mastitis.

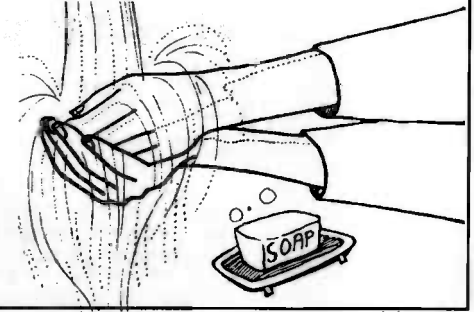


Well, for a cow to get mastitis, the germ usually gets into the udder through the teat. This can happen when you have a dirty wet Boma. But often it is from the germ on your hands, from dirty udder cloths or from flies around the Boma.

Although most people wash the udder, they then milk with dirty hands! This is just asking for trouble! Infact unless you are able to boil or disinfect the cloth between milkings, the chances are that the cloth will be dirtier than the cow!



The best way is to wash your hands under running water and splash more clean water over the teats - making sure that the water running off the teats doesn't go back to the bowl.



Dirty milking salves can be a source of germs too - don't use milk, lard etc. clean milking salve should do the trick.



And how do you know if the cow has mastitis?

Every time you milk, it is worth checking for mastitis. Look at the udder to check that each of the quarters is normal. Feel them with your hands to check that they are not unusually swollen or hot. And if the cow kicks when you do this, then that may be a sign that it is painful.



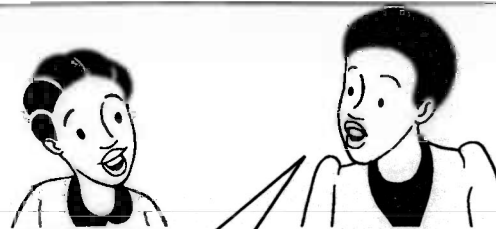
You can then look at the first milk from each teat. If you squeeze a strip of milk onto a dark background like the cup from this Thermos flask, you can see if there are any little clots, lumps or flakes and if the milk is bloodstained or unusually watery.



And what do you do when you see any of this?

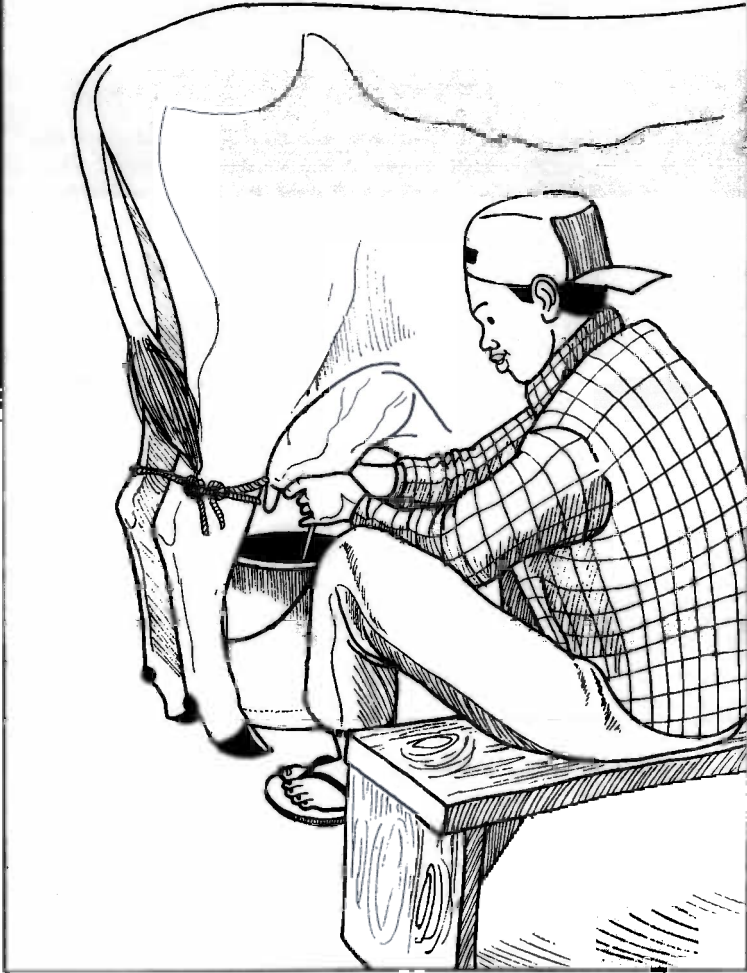


Well, it is best to act fast! Milk the three healthy quarters of the cow first. Then you should milk out the infected quarter and throw away the bad milk, preferably where no flies can get at it. Milk out the infected quarter every two to three hours until the clots disappear.

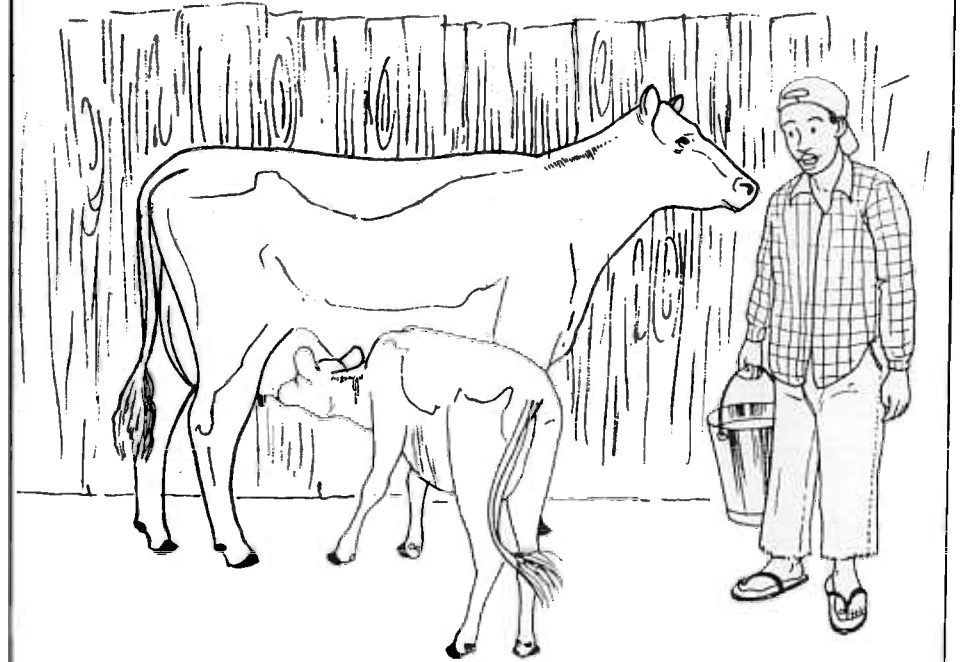


And remember to wash your hands after milking that quarter. It is always worth calling on a vet or the animal health assistant to see the animal as soon as possible as she may need dawa to help her to get better.

Good milking practice helps to reduce mastitis too. Gentle milking means that you don't hurt the teats ...



... and letting the calf back in with the cow after milking helps ensure that all the milk is removed from the udder.



Wambui and Mother are discussing back at home

So the nurse and Mwariama have really been telling us the same thing. It is important to clean our hands before feeding the baby and it is also important to clean our hands before milking the cow.

Next time I'm feeling lazy and can't be bothered to wash my hands, I'll remember what the nurse and Mwariama said about prevention being better than cure. Washing my hands may stop the baby from getting skin infections, vomiting and diarrhoea and the cow from getting mastitis.

A small amount of money spent on soap and my effort to wash my hands after the toilet, working in the shamba, before feeding the baby and milking the cow may save us from having to spend large amounts of money at the doctors or the vets.

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Funded By: DFID Livestock Production Programme (LPP Project R7425)