



## A LOVE SET IN MILK & DAIRY



Naina at her dairy farm in Serea, Naitasiri.

Being whisked away by the love of her life to the dairy fields of Serea, Naitasiri now seems like a distant memory for 69-year-old Naina Magitiwai.

At the ripe young age of 19 years, Naina was betrothed to Talaiasi Mualuvu, a dairy farmer from the settlement of Vatuwaqa in Serea, and as a young lass, she was in for a surprise as she had never once before experienced the rigors of dairy farming, she was more accustomed to crop farming back then.

She described her first encounters with cows and milking as arduous and physically straining on her but it was the love she had for her husband that helped her to persevere, this would become her new normal and be woven into the fabric of her marriage to

Talaiasi.

"To me personally, I knew how to plant crops, that was my farming but milking was a totally new experience and I was introduced to it by my husband and his family," she said.

"Milking involves waking up early in the morning, and each morning the farm would be bustling with people scurrying to the milking shed at the break of dawn," she said with fond memories.

"On my first account I would wince and cry from the pain, objecting to the pain milking does to my fingers and also because of the huge change to my sleeping patterns," she said.

During their time alone as a couple, her husband would reassure her, "Keep practicing and you will surely get the

hang of it and over the years I did," she smiled.

"I remember my father-in-law's rule on the farm - every morning, no one must sleep-in, all family members are to be in the milking shed before we could have breakfast, and in the afternoon, tea and biscuit was always in abundance, and that was our routine.

Those were Naina's first experiences as an amateur of sorts at milking cows but over time, she would become an expert, as evidenced by her calloused hands, the visible marks of years of experience in dairy farming, something she has no regrets over because it was love that motivated her.

"Because I was in love with my husband and vowed to be with him for better or for worse, I didn't run away

from milking," she jokingly said.

Talaiasi and Naina brought up their four children on the farm, imparting the knowledge they had garnered together as husband and wife on their dairy farm, teaching their children the values of love of work and fostering within them the passion for dairy farming. Their children were also taught to be grateful for the life they lived no matter their possessions.

"The year my husband died, I thought of my children and their future, and the farm was there for us as a source of survival," she said.

"He was also the only child, out of his seven siblings, that opted to remain here and bring up his family on the farm and when he passed, my children knew what to do," said Naina.

2002 dawned with the winds of change on the Vatuwaqa dairy farm as her dear husband Mr. Talaiasi Mualuvu was called to eternal life, leaving behind the care of the farm to his wife and their children. "Because the farm holds a lot of good memories for my children and my in-laws, we kept the legacy my father-in-law and husband had set," she said.

The struggling widow took over the milking reins and soldiered on for the future of their children.

"It saw them through school, tertiary and when they went for greener pastures I thought I would rest but I found myself not being able to do what I have always wanted to do when I first got married; to quit milking," she said.

And so Naina asked one of her children Ruci Veisaunigauna to stay with her on the farm and help with the milking of the cows and the overall management of the family farm.

"We have a total of 48 cows on the farm, 8 of which are for milking and we have decided to only milk at 6am in the morning for the 7.30 am pick up by the Fiji Cooperative Dairy Company Limited (FCDCL)," said Naina.

"Not only did it provide for my family, but from the milk income my husband would also lavishly treat me to material things that sometimes made me smile as I wore them on the farm, it was something I fondly remember about him and though people couldn't see it, it kept me happy," she said.

Being a widow never hindered her performance as a mother and role model to her children.

"My husband never got to witness the marriage of any of our children but I am thankful that he paved a way for us when he was still alive," she said.

"We are often challenged by the factors that could stop us from continuing, if you are new to something, keep practicing and you will one day excel," she said.

"Cherish the love of your spouses and when you are newly married, and introduced to something you are unaccustomed to, make an effort to learn just like what my milkman taught me," she smiles faintly.

With her proven track record in dairy farming and its bountiful returns her family has earned from it, Mrs Mualuvu is testament that love can conquer anything, even the challenges of dairy farming.

She can be found at the Suva market on weekends, selling her rootcrops, going back to her roots as a crop turned dairy farmer.

## CARE OF NEW BORN CALF

The golden hour: The first hour after calving is the most critical period in the entire life of a new born calf

### Important Points to Remember

- As soon as the calf is born, clean nostrils and mouth which helps the calf breathe better and help prevent future breathing problem.
- Separate the calf from the mother after birth so that the mother doesn't lick the calf - this is to reduce direct contact with the Dam to reduce the probability of Tuberculosis (T.B) in calves.
- Clean/wipe the calf with a clean dry towel to remove mucus and after birth fluids.
- Treat the navel cord - apply iodine (spray) and apply naval clip on the cord to avoid entry of bacteria through the naval cord opening. A poorly maintained navel is the gateway to serious infection.
- Weigh the calf and record (I.D of the Dam, Date, Time, Sex, Breed, Bred through.)
- Allow it to rest on warm bedding - well ventilated and secured shed.
- Milk out the colostrum and pasteurize.
- Feeding colostrum - follow the golden rule. "All new calves should be fed with 4L of gold colostrum during the 1st 6hrs of its life" This should be done to protect calves from disease for the first 3 months

of its life. "Colostrum is the calf passport to life" Hand feeding of new born calves is recommended so that we are sure about the amount of colostrum an individual calf receives.

- Seek the Veterinarian's advice on vaccination.
- Provide calves with freshly cut pasture daily from day one.
- Offer concentrate feed (calf grower) from day 5 onwards to enhance growth.

### Colostrum Pasteurization for Calves

The Dairy Industry in Fiji intends to reduce the occurrence of Tuberculosis, increase the survival rate of heifer calves and minimise exposure to Tuberculosis by using two simple but effective steps:

- Removing calves at birth.
- Heat treatment of colostrum and milk.

### Heat Treatment

Can be done using an electric water heating urn and stainless-steel pot, can or a large pot of water instead of an urn. Surplus colostrum can be kept refrigerated for several days, frozen at 2litres at a time in a clean new plastic bag. When new calf is born, stored colostrum is ready in the size needed for a single feed.

### Electric Water Heating Urn

- Fill the urn with water and bring to temperature of around 75°C.
- Place a stainless pot/can with 2 litres of colostrum inside it for 30 minutes. Use a thermometer to check the colostrum so that it doesn't heat above 60°C, as this will affect the level of antibodies and will make it thick and hard to drink.
- Add cold water to the urn if the temperature starts to go above 60°C. Allow colostrum to cool until it is just warm enough for the calf to drink (about 35-38°C).

### Large Pot of Water

- Instead of an urn a large pot of water can be used and heated on a gas cooker/fire.
- Place a stainless pot/can with 2 litres of colostrum inside it for 30 minutes.
- Use a thermometer to check the colostrum so that it doesn't heat above 60°C as this will affect the level of antibodies and will make it thick and hard to drink. Add cold water to the urn if the temperature starts to go above 60°C. Allow colostrum to cool until it is just warm enough for the calf to drink (about 35-38°C).

**Remember:** All new calves should be fed with 4L of gold colostrum during the first 6 hours of its life.



Calves should be fed with 4litres of gold colostrum within the first 6 hours of their life.

