

CHAPTER EIGHT

Words, Words, Words

As a dairy farmer in the great state of North Dakota, there are only two things that can ruffle my normally unflappable exterior sending me into a tailspin that nosedives into panic: something happening to Daisy (my prize milking cow) and my milking machine breaking down. So, when I woke one nippy, August morning and the normal hum of the milker was replaced by a chug, ugh and a glug, I knew I was in a heap of trouble.

So, I called Manfred Maloney, our area's handiest repair man and pleaded with him to pay me a visit and bring his milking machine repair tools. Manfred arrived shortly with a little giddy-up in his step. He loved it when there was an emergency and somebody needed him. He asked me to describe the symptoms. I only got to "chug" and "ugh" and he cut me off. Apparently, he didn't need any more information from me.

He then started to examine the machine. He poked, pulled, prodded and pondered. He muttered an occasional "Um huh," "I see," "Well, I'll be." He then turned his attention from his patient to me. His diagnosis was ready. He folded his arms across his barrel chest, cleared his throat and said, "Your AB line is frayed closing off access to the capacitor and dual 910 mixer. I should be able to fix it with a retooled MP cord or I

might have a new 83-A in the truck. It's not quite the same, but if I reconfigure the ampage, we should get you working in an hour. What would you like to do?"

I just stared at him. For all I knew, he could have been speaking in Norwegian. I didn't have a clue what he had just said. Oh, I got some of the words. But, most were lingo and jargon that were part of his field, not mine. I considered the differences between a "retooled" MP cord (sounded secondhand) or a new 83-A that's "not quite the same" (sounded iffy).

Manfred stared back at me. He loved this position of power, spouting off his fancy, no-one-knows-but-me words. Not wanting to appear, well, uninformed, I said, "Manfred, I'm not quite sure. Could you go over those options again for me?" Then, in a tediously slow, very deliberate manner, he said, "A du...al...9...10 ...mix...er." It was no use. Saying it slow didn't make it any easier to understand. There was no light bulb going off. No aha moment. I grudgingly admitted defeat, "Manfred, I don't have the foggiest notion of what you're saying and besides, you're the expert, you decide!"

As I made my way back to the house, I started thinking that Manfred's really no different from a lot of professionals, and maybe we can all learn something from my experience. First of all, **if you don't use words the other fella knows, you can't communicate with him or her.** Seems simple enough, but have you thought about those fancy words you use so casually with patients