

Adams Advanced Nutrition, Inc.

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Reducing Mastitis: Not Rocket Science!

One of the most frustrating and costly problems on most dairy farms is mastitis.

Mastitis and associated high somatic cell counts (SCC) cost producers because of

decreased milk production, treatment costs, discarded milk, and increased involuntary culling. The National Mastitis Council estimates that the economic loss to mastitis is approximately \$185 per cow per year.

For example, the average SCC in Minnesota is 350,000 to 450,000. There are many reasons to try to lower that. Controlling mastitis will lower costs and boost your profit. As producers we have the responsibility to provide the highest quality product for consumers, and consumers of the future will demand it more than ever. High SCC decreases fluid milk shelf life and cheese yield. In addition, many countries have a maximum SCC limit of 400,000. And in order for our dairy products to compete in the export market, we have to lower our SCC nationally.

Experience has shown that if new infections occur at greater than 5% of the milking cows each month, SCC will increase. If you can keep new infections less than 5%, herd SCC will decrease. Diagnosing these new infections is an important part of solving your mastitis problem and working to reduce your SCC.

Mastitis treatment can be frustrating and is often futile. That means the focus of mastitis control should be on preventing new infections. How do you go about that? One excellent approach is to form a diagnostics team to help solve the problem. This team should include your veterinarian, dairy plant field representative, extension personnel, nutritionist and others.

Below are general steps in solving a high SCC problem:

1. Define the problem. Use DHIA and/or on-farm records, bulk tank SCC records, bulk tank cultures, and individual cow cultures to try and understand which cows are infected and when they are getting infected.

2. Identify the troublemakers. Use bulk tank and individual cow cultures to determine the main organisms causing elevated SCC or clinical cases. Different organisms will require different solutions.

3. Generate possible solutions. Based on the information you gathered in steps 1 and 2, work with your diagnostics team to generate a list of possible

solutions. If several organisms are responsible, you will need to use a multiple-pronged approach.

4. Develop an action plan. Work with your team to develop an action plan based on step 3.

5. Set up a plan to monitor progress. One of the most important components of any plan is to set up monitors to show whether your plan is working. The use of multiple monitors (e.g., BTSCC and bulk tank culture) is often best since no single monitor is perfect. Some possible monitors:

- Bulk tank SCC graph for each milk pickup
- Monthly bulk tank culture for mastitis pathogens
- Individual cow DHI SCC
- CMT of all fresh cows (How many cows are calving infected? Which quarters are infected?)
- Culture of all fresh cows with high CMTs (What organisms are causing infection?)
- Culture of all new clinicals and new infections (new cows over 200,000 SCC) each month (What organisms are causing infection?)
- New infection rate on all cows (goal < 5%) New infection rate on fresh cows (goal <10%)
- Rate of clinical mastitis (goal < 2%/month)

6. Carry out the plan. Make changes that you and your team decide are appropriate.

7. Monitor progress and adjust the plan as needed. Review the monitors and progress monthly (or more frequently) to determine if the desired progress is being made. If it is, continue on the same course. If not, find out why. Is the problem the plan of action or failure to successfully implement the plan? Reevaluate the action plan and/or retrain personnel. Continue to fine-tune your plan until you achieve your SCC goals.

Progress can be slow depending on the organism and plan implemented. However, if you use a systematic approach, you will make consistent progress toward your goal. Once reached, a low SCC can reward your farm with increased profitability.

(edited from an article by Jim Salfer, U of Minnesota Extension Service, Stearns County, MN)

PLAN AHEAD...

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RENAISSANCE... for RESULTS!



AROUND THE FARM... After a long and persistent winter, it is hard to imagine the effects of heat and humidity, which inevitably will plague us in the near future. Among many considerations, it is important to monitor the temperature/humidity index (THI) ~ a correlation between actual temperatures and the percent of relative humidity. When these [two] indicators increase simultaneously, there is a greater probability for livestock to experience varying levels of heat stress. Heat stress (at any level) can

negatively impact the productivity and profitability of your operation. While we are unable to maintain ideal conditions year-round, it is possible to achieve a measure of relief that can help to reduce the incidence of heat stress and its short-term and long-term impact. Equipment maintenance is critical (fans, sprinkler systems, etc.). However, it is equally important to review your entire feed and management programs, determining if a ration safely provides adequate energy and nutrition to help counter the impact of heat stress, and ensuring you have management plans that are designed to tackle the problems associated with heat stress before they take a toll on livestock. These factors can all have a positive effect on livestock throughout the hot days (and nights) of late spring and summer. Be prepared – and help your livestock to stay cool even during those hot, “dog days” of summer! This is an investment in your herd’s well-being.

A POINT TO PONDER... Within a few weeks, school will be finished for the year and students will be spending more time at home for their long-anticipated summer vacation! Regardless of where you live, it is important to drive with added caution, aware that children may be running, cycling and playing near roadways and thoroughfares. Children are often so caught up with the activities of the moment that they forget to use caution where vehicles may be in use. It is also important to practice extra care around farm equipment ~ whether tractors and implements, or equipment used for feeding livestock and cleaning facilities. Take time to enjoy the beauty of springtime... and practice safety year-round!



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May 2007...



*reducing mastitis.
safety ~ school's out!
dealing with heat stress.
...and much more.*

Check it out.