

BLACKWATER VETERINARY CLINIC

Newsletter

Mallow, Co. Cork.



How MUCH Is YOUR
CELL COUNT COSTING YOU?

Sub-clinical mastitis causes a reduction in milk yield (it is estimated that a cow with a SCC >200,000 will have a reduction of 2.5% in milk yield), milk quality (reduction in lactose, casein, calcium and keeping quality) and subsequently shelf life of the processed product. Once the milk leaves the farm the quality cannot be improved. Processors do not want to pay top dollar for poor quality milk. Teagasc and Cellcheck have come up with a cost checker to estimate the losses due to mastitis on any farm. Examples of lost profit are;

Number of cows milking	Annual average SCC	Estimated reduction in net farm profit(€)
70	200 - 300	10,668
70	300 - 400	13,039
100	200 - 300	15,269
100	300 - 400	18,627
140	200 - 300	21,377
140	300 - 400	26,078
140	> 400	30,719

These are fairly substantial figures. **About 80% of these losses are made up from loss of production, lost bonuses and culling.** If you are worried about the losses that you may be incurring look for information from your vet. We are the people who are trained to help you. An initial consultation with us will be a valuable start to reducing your average annual SCC and increasing your profits.



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CELLCHECK TARGETS TOP 5

1. Post milking Teat disinfection.
2. Wearing clean disposable gloves.
3. Changing liners at 2,000 milkings.
4. Routine machine maintenance.
5. Milk recording.

These are non-negotiable practices. They should be done on every farm, whether to get your SCC down to acceptable levels or if you are there, then to keep you there.

Post milking teat disinfection:

1. You need a product that is long acting in the presence of organic matter (faeces).
2. The whole teat from top to bottom and all the way around should be covered. This is best done by teat dipping but if you teat spray then special care is needed to do the job properly.
3. Cows should not be allowed to lie down before the teat end has properly closed. This usually takes 30 minutes.
4. Disinfectant needs to have enough high quality emollient to keep the teats in top condition.

Milk Recording

Milk recording allows us to identify the problem cows, those with sub-clinical mastitis contributing greatly to the bulk SCC. Once we know these cows we can identify the problem quarters by using the California Milk Test. When compared to the losses that farmers incur then the cost of milk recording is minor. The benefit you will get from the extra information is phenomenal.

Cows	Cost for 4 tests/year	Cost for 10 tests/year	Difference
70	€805	€1120	€315
100	€1150	€1600	€450

Other records that you should keep include;

1. Clinical Cases/Treatments;

Include the Date, Cow ID, Quarter infected, Treatment and Response.

This information can be entered into your icbf profile if you avail of herd plus. Information kept in this manner can be analysed a lot easier but this obviously depends on the dedication that you have to entering it.

2. Pathogens

- Farmer can take samples of clinical cases before they receive antibiotics and freeze for later analysis if necessary.
- Routine culturing of the bulk tank milk (to find the pathogens causing sub-clinical mastitis).
- Bulk tank culture prior to drying off (to plan drying off strategy).

3. Teat Health

- This helps examine machine performance, overmilking or poor cluster removal.

4. Culling rate for mastitis

5. Use of teat disinfectant, liner changes etc.

Hygienic Milking Routine;

- Milkers should always wear clean disposable gloves.**
- Wash teats if heavily contaminated.*
- Fore strip.*
 - It is a legal requirement to check milk before it enters the bulk tank.**
 - It stimulates milk let down.*
- A pre-dip should be fast acting leaving no residues. Wetting of the udder without drying causes a congregation of bacteria at the teat end ready to infect the quarter during the milking process. Foam preparations clean the teat better.*

5. *Wait 30 seconds*
6. *Drying should be done with individual paper towels.*
7. *Clusters should be applied within 90 seconds of stimulation of milk let down. This becomes a problem where milkers are trying to do too much at the one time. In such cases each line of cows should be broken into sections so that the proper milking process can be carried out.*

The main aim of mastitis control is to reduce the source of infection and to stop it spreading to new animals.

Control of spread includes a hygienic milking routine as outlined above. This can be helped by segregating problem cows and milking last, not milking problem quarters, cluster dipping between cows or having a back flushing system installed. Each farm is different and a program needs to be worked out with your vet. Sit down with your vet and talk about your situation on a one to one basis.

Drying Off

It is best to dry cows off abruptly and to give them an 8 week dry period. Their dry cow nutrition is important. Poor energy balance, mineral imbalance and SARA lead to immunity problems including mastitis.

We dry off cows so that they can recover their energy for the next lactation. This can also give us a chance to treat some cows that have had mastitis during the previous lactation. We make decisions on which of our problem cows have the best chance of being cured during the dry period and we cull the rest.

Factors that affect the success of treatment include age, number of quarters affected, number of episodes throughout the previous lactations, treatment choice and the length of treatment.

Sometimes it is a good choice to dry off problem cows at an earlier stage than normal. This gives better cure rates although care needs to be taken with their nutrition so that they do not get too fat.

When drying off cows it is best practice to do this job at a time not associated with milking. This is a job in its own right. Concentration is vital and all distractions such as radio, mobile phones etc. should be avoided. A good technique is essential and don't forget to disinfect the teats after application. Always record the cows you have given dry cow therapy to and when you did it.

ASCEPTIC MILK SAMPLE COLLECTION

1. **Use clean disposable gloves.**
2. **Wash teat with chlorhexidine.**
3. **Swab with alcohol wipe.**
4. **Discard the first 6 squirts.**
5. **Squirt sample into a sterile container held at an angle of 45* to the teat and far enough away from it so as to avoid any contact.**