
DAIRY NEWSLETTER

FRESH COW MASTITIS CONTROL

The summer of 2016 will be remembered by 2 words – HOT and DRY! Unfortunately these two adjectives can be trouble for our dairy farms. One of the many frustrating issues in this weather is an increase in mastitis and somatic cell counts, especially in fresh cows. A cow is most susceptible to contracting a mastitis infection in the dry period and in the first 30 days in milk. Also consider that heat and humidity in the summer causes heat stress which reduces a cow's natural immunity, and favours rapid bacterial growth in the environment. In addition, if your dry and fresh cow pens are potentially maximized or over crowded thanks to fall incentive calvings, this could lead to increased contamination and disease spread. All of the sudden the perfect storm is created for increasing the clinical incidence of the most prevalent and costly disease found on your dairy farm. Now is a great time to review your mastitis control and on farm screening program with your herd health veterinarian.

Keep it clean:

Mastitis is most often caused by bacteria that are common in the environment. Therefore, bedding in the transition and fresh cow areas should be the cleanest and driest possible. Hot, humid weather tends to make bedding wetter and allows bacteria to multiply more rapidly, therefore more frequent cleaning of pens and stalls and more frequent addition of new, clean, dry bedding is recommended during the summer months.

Other areas of cleanliness to consider would be ensuring alleys are scraped more often to decrease contamination from feet (Dirty feet = dirty bedding) and splashing potential. If dry cows are out on pasture, ensure shaded areas, where large groups of cows will congregate, do not become too mucky and wet due to fecal and urine contamination.

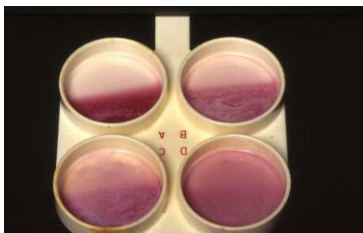
Proper use of dry cow antimicrobial therapy is still recommended, in addition to a teat sealant to assist in keeping bacteria out during the dry period. Ensure you are administering each product according to label direction and adhering to the required withdrawal times post calving.

Be sure to Screen:

Having an active fresh cow mastitis monitoring system in place on your farm is key to knowing if your dry and transition cow mastitis control program is working. There are 2 steps to a fresh cow mastitis monitoring system, with both being quite simple and inexpensive.

Step 1: CMT

This test takes less than a minute to perform, costs pennies to implement and can provide much needed data as to how well your dry cow mastitis management is working. Performing a CMT on every fresh cow within the first 3 days of calving should be done to identify cows with high SCC at the time of calving and act immediately so that problems don't linger and cause more lasting udder health issues.



If a cow has a positive reaction to the CMT, it means there are white blood cells that have been sent to the udder to fight or ward off an infection. This doesn't necessarily mean the cow needs to be treated with intramammary antibiotics, but it does mean you should continue to monitor her affected quarter(s) and redo the CMT in another 1-2 days.

Speak with one of our veterinarians to review proper CMT technique and how to properly interpret the results.

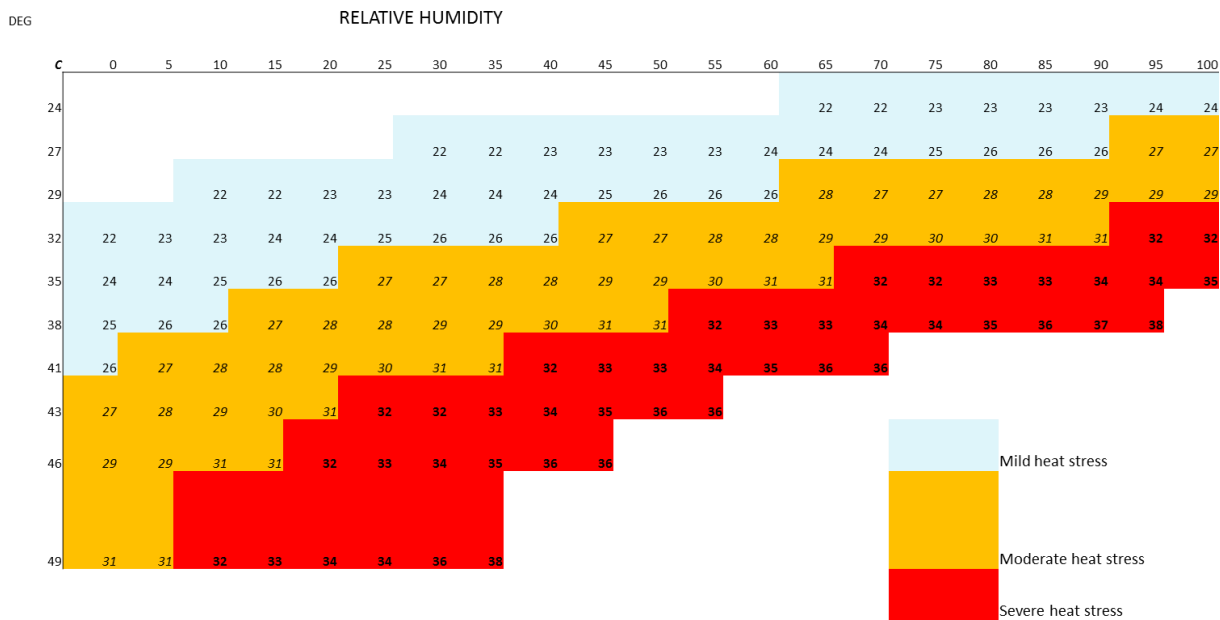


Step 2: Culture

Collect a sample of milk from a cow with a recurring positive CMT or obviously abnormal milk and submit it to us at the vet clinic and we will run an in-clinic culture, with results available to you in 24 hours. The results of this culture will give us a better idea as to whether we should treat the cow and with what product, or if we simply need to re-focus our efforts back to management of the dry cow environment. There is currently a promotion going, where every box of Cefa Lak, Cefa Dri or Dry Clox purchased, makes you eligible for a free in clinic culture. Call the clinic today and speak with Trish to see if your farm is eligible for this offer.

Keep ‘em Cool:

Cows function best when they are kept within their thermal neutral zone, which is a product of the environmental temperature and humidity levels. When the temperature-humidity index rises above 22 (see the chart below), the cow will start to experience negative consequences due to the heat. One of those consequences is an immune system with reduced function. We know the results of heat stress in lactating dairy cows as reduced signs of estrus, reduced feed intake and milk drop. But we often overlook the effects of heat on dry cows because they are not milking to see those production losses. But when you consider the dry cow is also acting as an incubator for a little mini inferno, there can be significant decreases in feed intake, leading to more fresh cow disorders. Properly placed fans should be enough for your dry cow area, but if sprinkler systems are used on farm, recognize the increase risk this may cause to a fresh cow mastitis problem and take the necessary steps to decrease these risks.



Boost ‘em Up:

Minimizing stressors and having an active and effective mastitis control program in place is key to preventing fresh cow mastitis in the summer, as well as all year. There is a new product on the market that could also be part of your mastitis control program that helps to boost the cow’s natural immunity.

Imrestor is an immune modulator, therefore is not an antibiotic and is not a vaccine. It helps to prime the cow’s natural immune system to be more effective when it is needed to fight disease. When the product is given 1 week prior to calving and on the day of calving, it has been shown to reduce clinical mastitis in the first 30 days of lactation by 32%. There may be additional benefits to the product, in terms of reducing other fresh cow diseases, simply because a healthier immune system is better for the overall health of the cow. Speak with your veterinarian to see if Imrestor is a product that can work on your farm.