

CELLCHECK TIP OF THE MONTH

It's all about the teats!

NEW MASTITIS infections occur when bacteria get into the mammary gland. There is only one point of entry, or opening into the gland, and that is the teat end. So essentially, the key to preventing new mastitis infections is:

- 1. KEEP** the numbers of bacteria as low as possible, and
- 2. KEEP** the teat end as healthy as possible.

While both of these principles are very important, sometimes teat health is forgotten about. Teats are well designed to act as the first line of defence, to keep bacteria out of the quarter. However, if teats are compromised and can't work as effectively as normal, bacteria can sneak in. So maybe it's time to give those teats a little extra TLC?

1. CHECK TEAT SKIN CONDITION

If it is cracked, or chapped, maybe you need to consider what teat disinfectant product you are using. Does it have enough emollient in it, to keep teat skin moisturised and supple? Is the complete barrel of the teat being covered with disinfectant?

2. NEVER REMOVE CLUSTERS UNDER VACUUM!

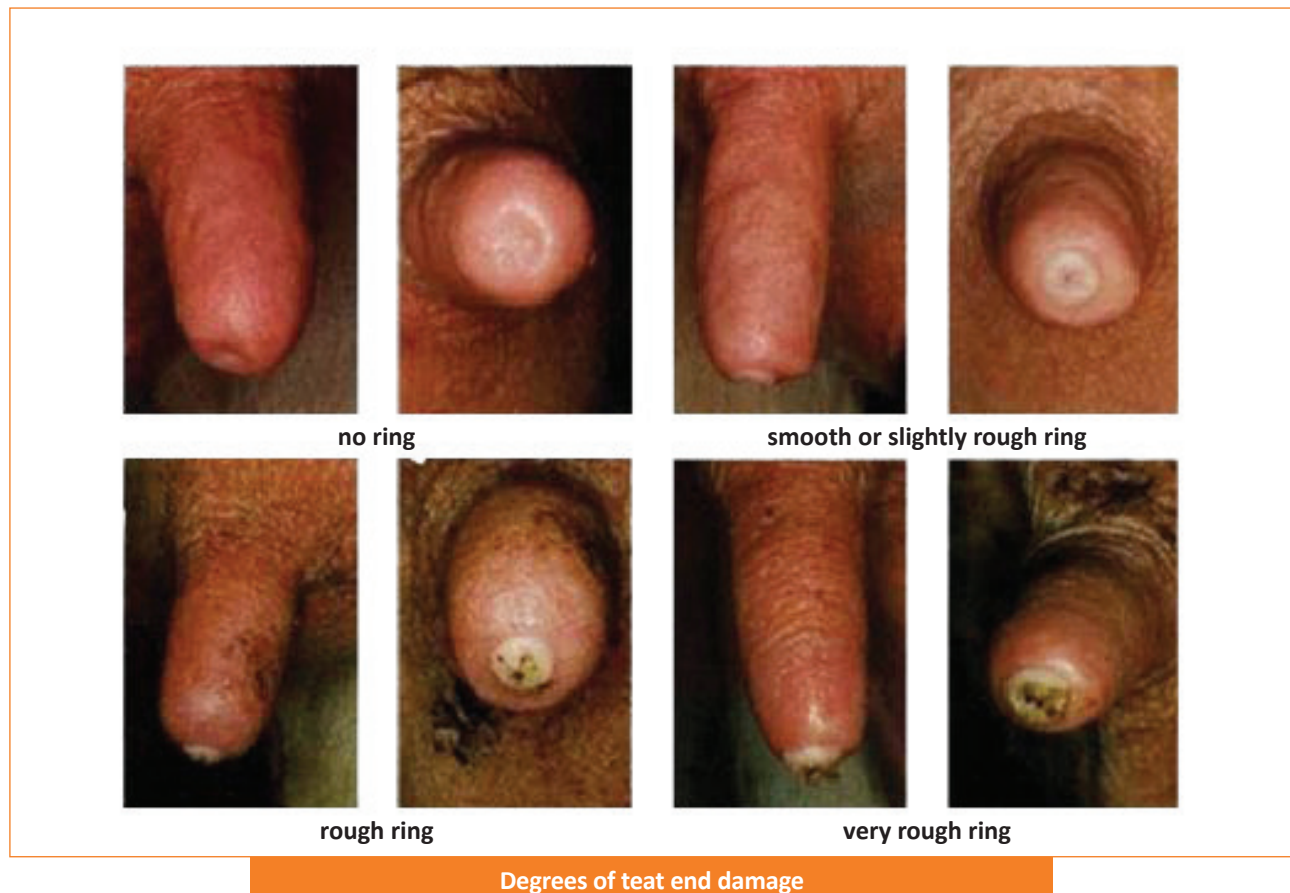
Air entering at the cluster mouth because of rough cluster removal, causes vacuum fluctuations in the cluster. Milk droplets can be thrown back against the teat ends. These impacts carry bacteria into the teat canal. So when taking the cluster off a cow, break the vacuum first and WAIT! After 1-2 seconds, the cluster should drop off.



Break the vacuum by kinking the long milk tube

3. WATCH FOR TEAT END DAMAGE

Skin thickens in response to forces applied to it. Just as the skin on your hands will develop callouses with manual work, so too does the skin at the teat end in response to milking and environmental effects. Teat end damage is also called 'hypercallosity' i.e. calloused. Damaged teat ends are not as effective at keeping bacteria out. Overmilking (i.e. low or no milk flow while clusters are on the cow), aged liners and/or high vacuum levels will all contribute to teat end damage.



For more information on managing teat condition, see Guideline 9 in
CellCheck Farm Guidelines For Mastitis Control.