

# Don't ignore a summer SCC rise!

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Is your bulk tank somatic cell count (SCC) starting to creep up slightly? If so, don't ignore it! It is likely to be because the number of infected quarters in your herd is starting to increase a little, which in turn can lead to more infected quarters, and so on. High herd SCC in late lactation is generally because of spread of infection during the summer, not 'just late lactation'. Don't assume that small bulk tank SCC increases during the summer will 'settle down' - act now, and set your herd up for late lactation, with minimal mastitis infections and maximum milk production.

Despite an annual improvement in the average SCC of herds over the last few years, we still consistently see herd SCCs starting to rise from early summer. It then usually continues to creep up for the rest of the year. The financial impact of a 'creeping' SCC should not be underestimated. For example, at a milk price of 30c/L, if the average bulk tank SCC of a 100-cow herd increases from 150,000 cells/mL to 250,000 cells/mL, it reduces the overall farm profit by approx. €8,200. An additional €4,000 of extra profit is lost if the bulk tank SCC increases from 250,000 cells/mL to 350,000 cells/mL.

## What to do?

**Milk record the whole herd now, and identify any high SCC cows i.e. SCC>200,000cells/mL**

1. These high SCC cows should be marked and milked last to **minimise disease spread**.
2. **Discuss a treatment plan with your vet** - while treatment may appear to be the most logical option, remember that cure rates can range from 20-80% depending on various factors, such as the bacteria involved, the duration of infection and the cow's lactation number.
3. **Remove the source of infection** - Dry off individual quarters i.e. simply stop milking it, do NOT use a dry cow tube. Consider culling if the cow is a repeat offender i.e. high SCC in two consecutive lactations.

**For full details on dealing with high SCC cows, see Management Note M in the *CellCheck Farm Guidelines for Mastitis Control*.**