→ Antibiotics are essential medicines for humans and animals. The use of antibiotics is known to be one of the factors contributing to a rise in antimicrobial resistance, which in turn poses a risk to public (and animal) health in the future. It has been common practice to treat all quarters of all cows with an antibiotic tube at drying-off, which is known as blanket dry-cow treatment. In order to help protect the ability of antibiotics to fight infection, the CellCheck Technical Working Group (TWG) supports the move away from blanket dry-cow treatment towards a selective dry-cow strategy, in a prudent manner, in appropriate herds.

→ A selective dry-cow strategy involves administering internal teat sealant only to a selected proportion of suitable cows at drying off, with the remainder of the cows receiving both an antibiotic tube and an internal teat sealant.

→ A selective dry-cow strategy is not without risk, hence the importance of the following recommendations when making farm-level decisions.
A SELECTIVE DRY-COW STRATEGY MAY BE CONSIDERED IN HERDS:

1. Where there is good evidence of a low prevalence of infection, for example a bulk milk SCC consistently below 200,000 cells/mL, a dry period new infection rate of less than 10% etc., and

2. Where good practices and high levels of hygiene can be achieved at drying-off, throughout the dry-period and at calving*, and

3. Where regular milk recording is carried out, with at least one recording in the last month prior to drying-off, and

4. Where the herd keeper is willing to engage with their veterinary practitioner in decision-making around their dry-cow treatment programme.

WITHIN THESE HERDS:

- Cows with an SCC consistently below 100,000 cells/mL** throughout the lactation and with no history of clinical mastitis may be considered suitable for internal teat sealant only at drying-off, provided high levels of hygiene can be achieved during administration.

- In all other cows, the TWG recommends using an internal teat sealant as well as an antibiotic tube.

*For more details, see CellCheck Farm Guidelines for Mastitis Control-Guidelines 1, 17-19 and Management Notes D, E and L.

** There is ongoing Irish and international research to determine appropriate SCC (or other) thresholds, to select cows suitable for internal teat sealant only. As yet, however, appropriate thresholds have not been clearly defined. This is reflected in the use of differing cow thresholds in different countries. These AHI recommendations will be reviewed in the future on the basis of new research conclusions.