

Timely Reminders in Preparation for Spring 2021

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It can be an anxious time waiting for the calving season to kick off but being well prepared will help make things easier. In relation to mastitis, it is important to review your records from last year, compare with other years and set targets for the coming year. This year will be a very important one for dairy farmers in terms of being prepared for the new veterinary medicines legislation that will be in place from January 2022. This legislation will mean that dairy farmers will need to change how they use antibiotics, and blanket treatment with antibiotics can no longer be used as a preventative measure i.e., when drying off uninfected cows. Change can be challenging, however sometimes the thought of having to change is worse than the process itself. If we are well prepared for the new legislation, there will be no need to fear it. Ultimately, this new legislation is about protecting antibiotics and doing all that we can to make sure they remain effective in both humans and animals.

Plan your mastitis management for the coming year. For example, if you are not milk recording, you need to get started. Milk recording is the best way of identifying cows that need antibiotic treatment at drying off. Completing a milk recording within 60 days of calving shows you how successful any dry cow treatment was at curing infections and identifies cows that picked up new infections during the dry period. Identify any cows that had a high SCC last year and pay close attention to them when they calve for any evidence of clinical mastitis.

Another important aspect of mastitis management is to identify what pathogens are present in your herd by building a profile from any clinical cases that occur during the year. Aseptic milk samples should be collected from any clinical case before you start treatment. These can be frozen for several months, and

then if you have a few of them they can all be sent to the laboratory together. Make sure they are correctly identified. Do not forget to record all clinical cases of mastitis and ideally send the information to ICBF by texting Mast and cow's freeze brand to 089 4577663, for example if cow number 200 has mastitis, type Mast 200. The more information we can gather on each cow during the lactation the better prepared we will be when it comes to cow selection for selective dry cow therapy at the end of their lactation, and better cow selection will mean better results.

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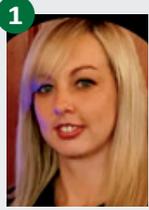
Other jobs that should be on the 'to do' list include:

-  Service the milking machine, check teat sprayer and nozzles and change the liners.
-  Have the calving area clean, disinfected, properly set up and ready to go.
-  Closely monitor cows and heifers that are near calving, as they are most susceptible to mastitis in the last 2 weeks before they calve.
-  Keep the cubicles dry and clean- it can get a bit tiresome at this stage of the winter, but spring is coming, and they will be outdoors before you know it!
-  Parlour train heifers. Teat spraying at this time has been shown to significantly reduce new infections. Examine them for any obvious warts that may require veterinary assistance.
-  Stock up on supplies e.g., gloves, teat disinfectant, milk sample bottles, calving equipment, marker, California Mastitis Test, calcium, salt (for frozen yards and milking machines).
-  Complete maintenance and repairs on areas that could pose a mastitis risk once cows are left out- roadways, around troughs etc.



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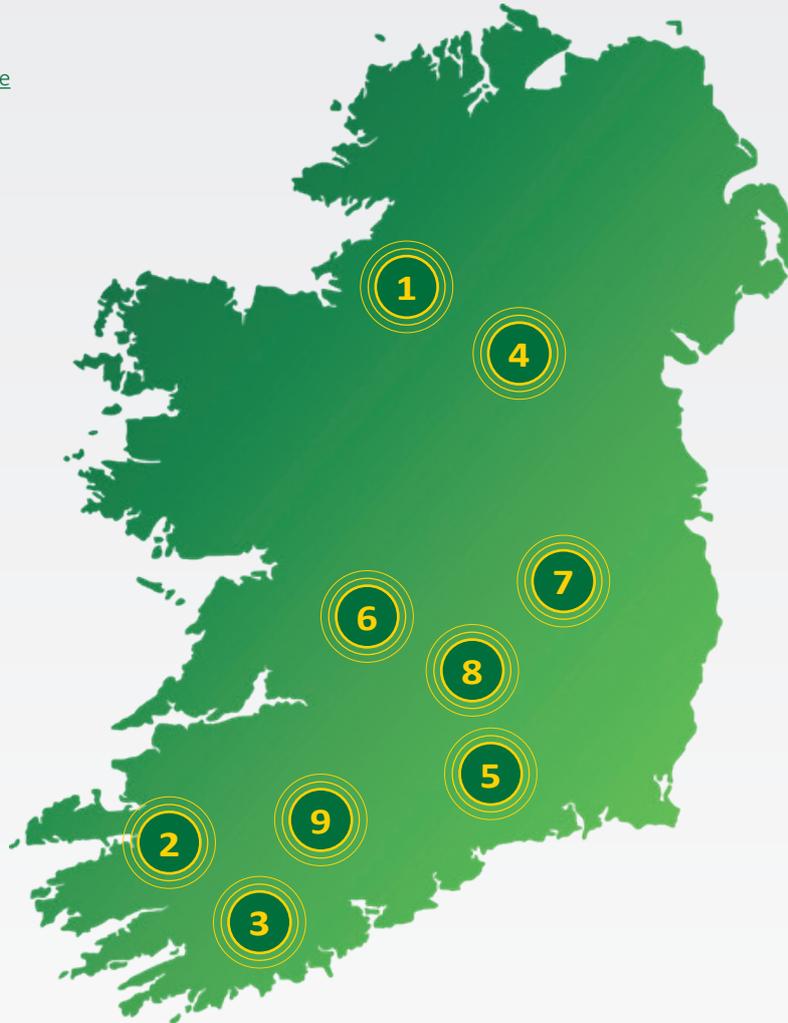
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