

- Abnormal milk
- Checking suspect cows
- Clots on milk filter
- Foremilk stripping
- Increased bulk tank SCC
- Milk samples for culture
- Swollen quarter

Throughout lactation, milking staff must keep a close watch for mastitis cases. Finding cases can sometimes be a challenge, especially in large herds, but the effort is worth it. If clinical mastitis cases are missed, they pour millions of cells into the milk tank and can significantly increase bulk tank SCC. Rapid detection and treatment of cases means fewer chronic infections develop, and there is less chance of infection being passed to other cows.

A case of clinical mastitis which requires treatment occurs when there is heat, swelling or pain in the udder, or there are changes in the milk (wateriness or clots) that persist for more than three squirts of milk. You need records of clinical cases and treatments to assess individual cows for culling and to monitor herd mastitis.

Your herd has a significant problem if there are more than 5 clinical cases per 100 cows calved in the first month of lactation, or 2 clinical cases per 100 cows in subsequent months of lactation. Milk cultures are recommended to identify which bacteria are involved if a herd problem emerges. A sterile sample must be taken before treatment is started for each case.

**Refer to Guideline 5.2** Forestrip all cows, for early detection of clinical mastitis.

### 10.1 Forestrip all cows before attaching clusters

Foremilk stripping is the single most effective way to detect clinical cases.

### 10.2 Monitor every test result for bulk tank SCC

A sudden increase may indicate one or more missed clinical cases. The effect a clinical case will have on the bulk tank will be more apparent in smaller herds.

Many milk processors now offer daily text services- sign up for this to ensure you get your results as soon as possible after each test.

### 10.3 Check for swollen quarters and quarters that don't milk out

Milkers should be looking for swollen quarters at every milking. When taking off clusters be alert for 'strings' of mastitis hanging from teat ends.

### 10.4 Watch for clots on the milk filter

Check the filter after every milking, before washing the plant.

If there is a separate mastitis/high SCC herd, check the filter before these cows are milked.

Learning to assess the nature of the material on milk filter (reading the filter) can be very useful.

### 10.5 If you notice clots on the filter, pay close attention when forestripping 'suspect cows' at the next milking

Suspect cows include:

- Cows which have not milked out.
- Cows which have recently had a case of mastitis (check clinical records for last month).
- Cows known to have had a high individual scc (check last milk recording sheet).

Look for clots, watery or discoloured milk that persists for more than three squirts.

Quarters with a few small flecks only in the first three squirts may be left untreated and checked again at the next milking. If these flecks continue at every milking, consider taking a milk sample for culture and check the individual cow SCC history.

For cows that are not sick, treatment during lactation should only be used when there are visible changes present in the milk (or if *Strep. agalactiae* is the infecting bacteria, in which case you should consult with your veterinary practitioner). The decision to treat should be based on factors such as the bacteria identified, parity, stage of lactation and mastitis history.



Checking the milk filter.

#### Refer to guideline 5.2

Forestrip all cows, for early detection of clinical mastitis.

**Refer to Management Note A**  
Milk cultures.



### Milk cultures

Milk cultures should be done if you have:

- More than 2 cases per 100 cows per month during lactation.
- More than 5 cases per 100 cows during the first month after calving.

**Refer to Management Note G**  
Records to keep on clinical cases of mastitis.

## 10.6 Send milk samples for culture to establish the organisms involved in the herd, if concerned by the number of cases

If you have had more than 2 cases per 100 cows per month in the past two months, or are concerned about the type of clinical cases of mastitis occurring, it is worthwhile checking the organism involved.

Samples for mastitis culture can be frozen and stored, so taking samples from all cases and freezing them allows you to send them for laboratory examination later, if necessary. Samples can be stored for up to 4 months without any negative effect on most major mastitis pathogens.

## 10.7 Treat and record clinical cases as recommended by the guidelines in this CellCheck publication

