

## Consider culling persistently infected cows

- Cows with repeat mastitis cases
- High cell count cows
- Problems in consecutive lactations

Despite long action and formulation to maximise penetration, antibiotic dry cow treatment (DCT) does not cure all existing infections. Many studies worldwide have established that cure rates are lower for older cows with chronic infections. Some particular bacteria are also very difficult to treat successfully in all age groups. Culling cows is the only way to eliminate some infections.

Chronically infected cows are likely to be a source of bacteria for other cows. Culling cows with chronic infections helps protect the healthy, young cows which are the future of the herd. A small number of high cell count cows can have a significant effect on bulk tank SCC level and milk quality payments. A decision to cull these cows should be based on both the risk of spreading infection and economics. Although culling infected (particularly older) cows is a key strategy in mastitis control, it is an expensive option. Herd cell count problems are seldom solved by culling alone. Remember that failure to prevent new infections will mean that other cows take their place at the top of the high cell count list.

### 15.1 Consider culling any cow when you find her third clinical case for this lactation

If only one quarter is involved, you may prefer to dry-off that quarter and milk the cow as a 'three teater'. Use a simple and clear ID method that all milkers are familiar with, to avoid the risk of accidental cluster application.

Ensure cows that have had three clinical cases of mastitis during the current lactation have been considered on the culling list.

## 15.2 Consider culling cows with high somatic cell counts in two consecutive lactations, despite treatment with antibiotic DCT in the dry period in between

If strategic (voluntary) culling is possible in the herd, include somatic cell counts as a factor to be assessed.

Cows to consider for culling are those which are unlikely to cure. For example, cows which have persistently high somatic cell counts throughout two consecutive lactations (despite receiving antibiotic dry cow treatment in the dry period between). Other issues such as age, level of production and reproductive status must also be considered for each cow.

Do not use antibiotic DCT on cows which you are going to cull immediately.

For cows that have been treated and subsequently culled - the withholding period of the treatment must be adhered to.



### High cell count cows

If cows with high cell counts are retained in the herd they pose a risk to other cows. Separate them and milk them last, if possible.

