

GUIDELINE

21

Buying cows - check histories and examine udders

- Bulk tank SCC history
- Buying heifers
- Checking cows
- DCT history
- Individual cow SCC history
- Introduced cows
- Milk sample culture
- California Mastitis Test

One of the most common ways of introducing contagious mastitis bacteria into a herd is in the udders of cows that are brought in. Bacteria such as *Staph. aureus* and *Strep. agalactiae* can spread rapidly through a herd- it is better not to introduce the bacteria in the first place.

21.1 Buy heifers before calving rather than cows, where possible

It is likely (although not certain) that a heifer that has never been milked in another parlour will be free of the major bacterial causes of mastitis.

21.2 Only buy cows if the bulk tank SCC from the herd of origin are available

If the average bulk tank SCC for the past twelve months is less than 200,000 cells/mL, it is likely that mastitis is reasonably well controlled in that herd, and the risk of infection will be lower.

21.3 Ideally only buy cows if they have information on individual cow SCC

Ensure that you have records from at least one full lactation - one milk recording is not enough.

As a guideline - avoid buying cows from herds with an average bulk tank SCC for the past 12 months > 200,000 cells/mL. The risk of buying in animals with infected quarters from these herds is significant.

Avoid buying individual animals from farms without milk recording (at least 4 recordings during the last 12 months). On milk recording farms, avoid cows with an individual cow SCC > 200,000 cells/mL during the previous 12 months.

Be especially wary of older cows, particularly if records are not available.

21.4 Ask about dry cow treatment history

If cows have received antibiotic dry cow treatment, you should know the product used and the date of treatment.

21.5 Manually check cows before buying them

Feel udders for uneven consistency or lumps.

Look at teats for teat sores or damage.

If lactating, check foremilk by stripping milk, preferably onto a black surface, and definitely not onto your hand.

21.6 Check new cows again before milking them with your own herd

Feel udders for uneven consistency or lumps.

Look at teats for teat sores or damage.

Check foremilk by stripping milk, preferably onto a black surface, and definitely not onto your hand.

Use a California Mastitis Test (CMT) on all new cows at first milking, to identify any problem quarters.

Milk containing infection may be spread during this procedure, so gloves should always be used, and hands washed in running water and disinfected between cows.

If abnormalities are detected, have a milk sample cultured.

Refer to Guideline 5.2

Forestrip all cows, for early detection of clinical mastitis.



California Mastitis Test should be done on each quarter of newly purchased cows.

21.7 Consider having a milk sample cultured even if no abnormalities are found when you check the udder

A milk sample (containing an equal portion of milk from each quarter) is likely to show *Staph. aureus* or *Strep. agalactiae* if it is present. The cost of the culture is likely to be a good investment.

If *Strep. agalactiae* or *Staph. aureus* is found, segregation and treatment is advised.

Consult your veterinary practitioner for more advice.

Refer to Management Note A
Milk cultures.

21.8 Milk introduced cows last until you are confident that they are free of mastitis

21.9 Do not milk other people's cows with your herd

Not all 'brought in cows' are 'bought in'. The risk of introducing mastitis by sharing milking facilities with cows from other herds is high. This includes temporarily milking 'carry over' cows for neighbours or sending cows away from your herd to be milked for a temporary period. To avoid costly mistakes it is best to maintain the principle of a closed herd at all times. This may include periods of emergency when electricity is down, but sharing milking facilities has serious biosecurity implications and needs to be managed with extreme caution.



Bio-security for buying-in cows

See the Biosecurity section of the AHI website

www.animalhealthireland.ie for biosecurity guidelines for purchasing animals.