

Key reminders for good practice at drying off

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Whether you are using antibiotic dry cow tubes, internal teat sealant or both, hygienic administration is essential to prevent bacteria entering the quarter and causing infection. Remember, meticulous hygiene is what will prevent new infections, and what happens at drying off this year will influence the incidence of new mastitis infections next year. It is important when identifying cows for selective dry cow therapy that you get veterinary advice to help select the cows that are suitable. When using teat seal only, the antibiotic is no longer present to protect the cows against poor hygiene at drying off. Outlined below is a reminder of the key steps that need to be followed at drying off and the care that needs to be taken to ensure this task is done properly. We need to change how we view drying off cows from 'just drying off a few cows' to 'a highly important job that needs to be done with the utmost of care'.

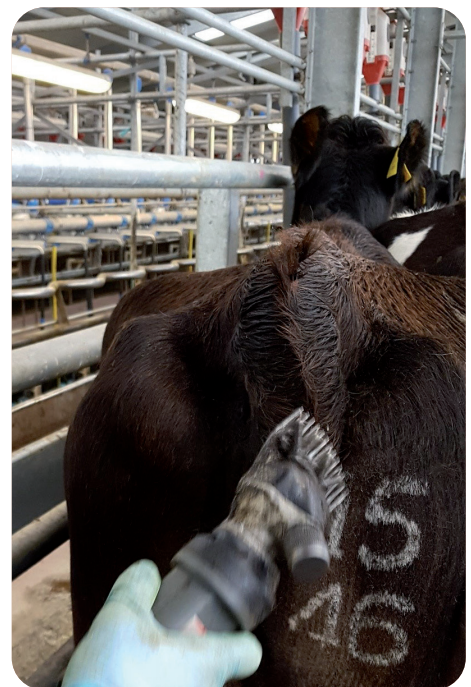
Preparation is key

Clip tails in the days beforehand, so that things are as clean as possible on the day of drying off.

Plan for the time and labour that treatment takes - more than one person is usually needed to do the job well.

Have everything ready in the parlour before you start:

- » Cow markers.
- » Disposable gloves.
- » 70% alcohol (i.e. surgical spirits) and cotton balls, or disinfecting teat wipes.
- » Tubes of dry cow antibiotic and/or internal teat sealant.
- » Good source of light, such as a head torch.
- » Paper towel.



Don't dry off cows during milking - draft them off and bring them back into a clean parlour, and after you have had a good breakfast! Don't be afraid to postpone if the weather is wet on the day you had planned to dry off - it is very hard to be hygienic when tails and udders are wet.

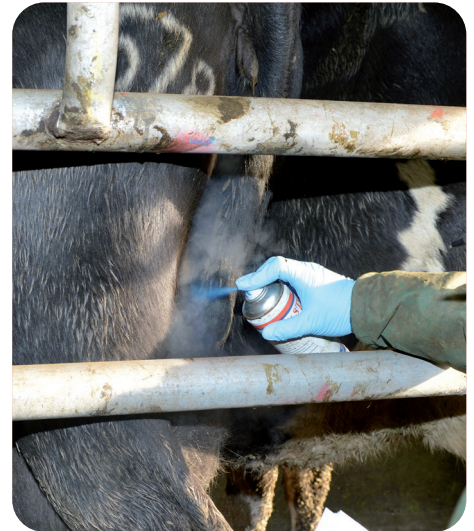
Clearly mark the cows for treatment before you start, to avoid any mistakes later.

Sterilise the teat ends

- » If the teats are muddy, clean and dry them thoroughly.
- » Wash your arms and hands with soap, drying with a disposable towel, before putting on clean gloves.
- » Sterilise the teat ends by vigorously rubbing the teat opening with a teat wipe or cotton ball and 70% alcohol for at least ten seconds. Repeat as necessary until no more dirt is seen on the wipe or cotton ball.
- » To avoid brushing against the sterilised teats with your arms, sterilise the two teats furthest away first (front teats) and then the two closest (rear teats).
- » Administer the tubes in reverse i.e. treat the two teats closest to you first, followed by the two furthest away.
- » Alternatively, one teat can be sterilised and treated at a time, starting with front teats. This may be more practical if more than one tube is being infused into each quarter e.g. antibiotic and teat sealant. Use a standardised order e.g. front left, then clockwise around the udder.

Tube administration

- » Remove the cap of the tube and, without touching its tip with your hand, gently insert the nozzle into the teat canal.
- » Massage dry cow antibiotic up into the quarter - **DO NOT massage the teat sealant!** Teat sealant must remain within the bottom part of the teat to create an effective barrier. When infusing the teat sealant, gently pinch the base of the teat closed (where the teat meets the udder) to ensure the teat sealant stays in the teat cistern.
- » If dry cow antibiotic and teat sealant are being used together, repeat the teat sterilisation step in between and make sure the teat sealant goes in last.
- » Ensure your forearms and gloved hands are cleaned in between treating the cows, and if gloves are damaged, get a new pair.



Thoroughly teat dip or teat spray teats after tubing

- » Record cow ID, date and details of product(s) used.
- » Keep cows standing in a clean area for the first two hours after drying off, until teat ends have closed and the risk of bacteria gaining access to the quarter has reduced.
- » Keep cows in a **dry and clean environment** after drying off and **check them daily at least once** for any signs of swollen quarters or illness. Although putting cows outdoors on a dry clean paddock post drying off may reduce infection pressures, they will still need to be monitored closely for any signs of infection or illness, particularly in wet weather.

Do not immerse individual tubes in water. If tubes need to be warmed, place the bucket of tubes in a bucket of warm water, or keep the tubes in a warm room prior to use or in an inside pocket.

If the end of a tube is contaminated at any time i.e. touches anything apart from the teat end, discard it and use a new one.

If you want to dry off the last cow as well as you did the first cow, do not dry off more than **20 cows per person in one day**.

For **more information**, see CellCheck Farm Guidelines 16-18, and Management Notes D & E and FAQ leaflet on answers to common problems at drying off.

GUIDELINE 16 Dry-off abruptly taking steps to reduce yields

- Yields below 9 litres
- Reducing yields
- Manipulating diet
- Drying-off areas
- Maintaining water supply

16.1 Dry-off cows as soon as their production reaches 9 litres or less per day

16.2 Cease milking cows producing 12 litres or less per day at the drying-off date

16.3 Take steps within 12 hours to reduce yields

Decide the drying-off date of the cow

- Reduce milking per day
- Three days before drying-off
- Where indoor
- Cause of infection
- Separate from other cows
- Where outdoor
- Allow access to shelter
- Move to a dry area
- Continue to monitor the cow
- Antiseptic treatment throughout the dry period




GUIDELINE 17 Administer dry cow treatment (DCT) as recommended

- Avoiding injuries
- Udder marking
- Disinfecting teat ends
- Recording treatment
- Withholding periods
- Drying-off environment

Administration of dry cow treatment (DCT) has some hazards, for cows and operators. It is critical that it is carried out properly.

It is easy to introduce bacteria into the teat if the teat end is not disinfected properly, or if it is contaminated before it has sealed. Infection with environmental bacteria can cause severe mastitis. Operators can be injured by cows during administration of DCT; it is important to take your time and have sufficient help.

Antibiotic residues in milk and meat must be avoided by observing the minimum dry periods and withholding periods.

This is particularly important when using DCT.

17.1 Plan with

Assign tasks to operators that are safe and efficient. More than one person should be involved in the process. Select a dry cow that is healthy and has a good udder. If possible, select a dry cow that is not in the peak of lactation. Which cow should be treated first?




GUIDELINE 18 Check udders daily

- Daily check
- Manual check
- Swollen quarters
- Clinical quarters
- Veterinary advice

Cows are susceptible to new infections particularly in the early dry period before their teats have sealed.

These infections must be identified and treated so that they do not persist and create problems after calving. Remember, however, the objective is to achieve teat plug formation quickly.





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