

# Key messages for managing mastitis during lactation

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**D**uring lactation, cows can become infected from both environmental and contagious mastitis organisms. Here are some key tips to help prevent both during the lactation.

- Evaluate the cow's environment- collecting yards, roadways, around water troughs, and sheds if feeding inside. Block off access to cubicles if they're not being used.
- If housing was an issue on your farm last winter and unless you plan on reducing cow numbers, begin planning now to increase cow accommodation. Having at least 11 cubicles per 10 cows during the housing period is vital to allow for normal cow behaviour, maximizing hygiene and minimizing the risk of mastitis.
- Clipping tails to keep cows udders and teats clean.
- Assess the milking routine- wearing gloves, having a consistent routine, ensuring the teats are clean and dry, forestripping, post milking teat disinfection and being calm in the parlour will all help reduce the risk of mastitis.
- Carry out milk recording to identify problem cows and use a California Mastitis Test (CMT) to identify problem quarter(s). Collect a sterile sample and send to the lab to identify the bacteria causing the mastitis and the best treatment to use. Don't forget to record any treatments given.
- Milk problem cows last or disinfect the cluster after milking a cow with a high SCC, either manually with diluted peracetic acid or automatically using a cluster flush system. Each cluster that milks one infected cow has the potential to infect the next 5-7 cows it milks if not disinfected!



- Routine machine maintenance between services:
  - » Examine the machine regularly, including air admission holes and the vacuum gauge. Listen to the pulsator, watch milk entering the receiving jar and check vacuum shut off buttons are working properly. Check regulators and listen to and check air filters. Check the drain valves on pulsator airlines, vacuum pump-oil level and oil drop rate.
  - » Check liner condition and alignment. Change the liners after every 2000 milkings. This works out at approx:
    - every 125 days (4 months) in a 12 unit parlour that milks 96 cows, or
    - every 125 days (4months) in a 16 unit parlour that milks 128 cows, or
    - every 200 days (6 ½ months) in a 20 unit parlour that milks 200 cows
  - » Teat scoring- check teat ends when the cluster comes off, as teat end damage may indicate a problem with the machine.

Knowing how your herd is performing is the first step to getting mastitis under control. To monitor performance you need records. At a minimum, in order to 'Keep your finger on the pulse' of your herd's performance, you need two types of records: Somatic cell count (SCC) records and Clinical case/treatment records.

Herd level SCC will give you a good overview of the udder health on your farm as infected cows will increase the overall herd SCC. Monitoring the clinical case rate during lactation will measure the effectiveness of mastitis control throughout the year.

If you milk record, the CellCheck Farm Summary report that you receive after each milk recording allows you to identify patterns of infection in cows e.g. those that have been recently infected. You can also assess the proportion of the herd persistently infected i.e. cows with a high SCC for the last two recordings. Use the Cost Check calculator to show how much a high bulk tank SCC is truly costing you.

If high SCC or mastitis is a problem on your farm register for a free CellCount Solutions consult now. This will help you take the first step in getting it under control.




## CELL COUNT SOLUTIONS

A FREE IN-LACTATION CONSULT FOR DAIRY FARMERS

- ✓ Would you like to reduce your SCC and improve milk quality?
- ✓ Is mastitis costing you money or creating problems for you or your milkers?
- ✓ Would you like an opportunity to create a herd-specific plan with your vet?
- ✓ Do you know you can avail of a free veterinary visit?

The Cell Count Solutions service is a free consult delivered by a trained veterinary practitioner, chosen by you, and is an opportunity for you to begin the process of mastitis problem-solving. It is also a first step in creating a multi-disciplinary team for your farm, to support you along the road of investigating and resolving mastitis issues. The consult will look at all relevant areas, including the cow, the milking routine, the environment, records etc. so that you can develop a farm-specific plan.

You nominate the people you want to include, such as your milk quality or farm advisor, milking machine technician etc. This service is funded through the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health and supported by the Rural Development Programme, and coordinated by Animal Health Ireland.

To register for the service, see the [AHI website](https://www.ahireland.ie).




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