

MAGNIFICENT MILK RECORDING

Michelle McGrath, CellCheck Assistant Programme Manager

Committing to beginning milk recording is the most difficult part because once you start and see the benefits it brings, you won't want to stop. Milk recording your cows regularly (ideally 6 times per lactation), allows you to easily see what is happening within your herd, identifying both problem cows and top performers. This enables you to make management decisions such as which cows are underperforming and spreading infection and should be culled, or which cows are high performers and are more suitable for breeding replacements. Milk recording also gives a better estimate of the value of your stock if selling or for disease compensation and also increases the herd's productivity thereby reducing the carbon footprint of every litre of milk.

To get the best value from milk recording, the first milk recording should be done within 2 months of calving. So in practical terms, if you started calving in mid-January then you need to have the first milk recording completed by St Patrick's Day. Don't wait until all the cows have calved.

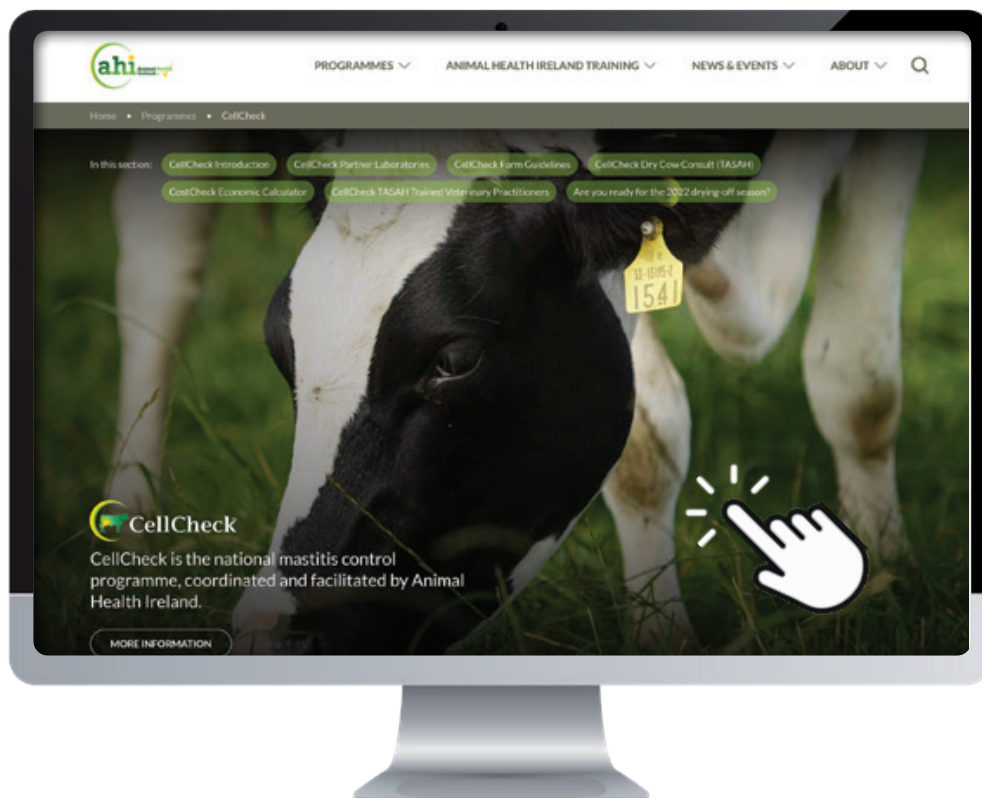
An early milk recording (within the first 2 months of calving) allows you to assess how your dry period went and identify 'problem' cows or cows with an SCC of greater than 200,000 cells/ml, which indicates they have mastitis. The dry period is assessed by measuring both the number of cows that were 'cured' from infection and the number of cows that 'picked up a new infection', during the dry period. When the first milk recording is done later than 2 months after calving, we can't say for sure if the cow became infected during the dry period or during lactation since calving.

Milk recording identifies and facilitates the management of problem cows early in the lactation before they have the opportunity to cause long term damage to your herd's average SCC. These problem cows infect the healthy cows in your herd at every milking which will cause your bulk tank SCC to increase and resulting in a reduced milk price for you. Research has also shown that farmers that milk record have higher gross margins of €39 per cow as they achieve higher milk yields by 178 litres and higher milk solids by 29kg per cow than those that don't milk record.

Following each recording, a report containing individual cow information and a CellCheck summary report is provided. Understanding these reports may appear tricky initially but a number of resources are available to help farmers work through the reports, including milk recording organisations, veterinary practitioners and advisors. Make use of this support as failure to act on the milk recording results limits the potential benefits from milk recording.

Contact one of the following milk recording organisations to find out more and to book in your first recording now, to get the date that suits you.

- ▶ www.progressivegenetics.ie
- ▶ www.munsterbovine.ie
- ▶ www.dairydata.ie
- ▶ Tipperary Co-op Tel: 086-8106661



<https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/cellcheck/>