

TEAT SPRAYING THE HIDDEN GEM!

Michelle McGrath, CellCheck Assistant Programme Manager

Maintaining good mastitis control involves a number of important management steps. Post-milking teat disinfection is one of these key steps but its importance is often overlooked. It can reduce the risk of new mastitis infections by 50% or more, but it can only achieve this if it is done thoroughly and throughout the entire lactation.

If the whole teat is disinfected after milking, it reduces the bacterial load and thus the risk of infection. Certain bacteria (*Staph aureus* and *Strep agalactiae*) in milk from an infected cow may be found on the liners and transferred to the teat skin of the next 5 to 6 cows that are milked with that unit. Once on the teat skin, the bacteria multiply (especially at sites of teat lesions and so increase the risk of infection of the quarter via the teat canal. Post-milking teat disinfection also helps keep teat skin healthy and heal teat lesions, and these actions have an important contribution to mastitis control.

Proper application of teat disinfectants is essential for optimal results as the benefits of teat disinfection are lost if the teat disinfectant does not cover all the teat skin. While spraying may be quicker and more convenient than teat dipping, ensuring thorough coverage is key to its effectiveness. It is essential that the entire teat (everywhere the liner has touched is disinfected and not just the teat end.

When choosing a disinfectant beware of unregistered products. Unregistered products may not provide the desired level of protection and can pose risks from residues to both animal and human health as well as the environment. If the product is registered it will have either a PCS or a HPRA (previously IMB) number on the drum label.

Teat disinfectants making a medicinal claim (e.g. aid in the prevention of mastitis) are subject to registration and regulation by the Health Products Regulatory Authority. If no medicinal claim is made, teat disinfectants are classed as biocides, and these are subject to registration and regulation by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine <https://www.pcs.agriculture.gov.ie/registers/biocidalproductregisters/>.

Ready to use (RTU) products are recommended as best practice, particularly for farms experiencing difficulties sourcing water of adequate quality or mixing solutions consistently.

A list of teat disinfectant products on the market can also be viewed on the Teagasc website - [Click here](#).