

# PREPARING FOR DRYING OFF

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**W**e are all now very aware of the risk that antimicrobial resistance, or AMR presents. We also know that this is one of the reasons why farmers are moving away from blanket dry cow therapy, which is no longer permitted by law. I have put together an essential checklist based on answers from many farmers who have successfully been doing selective dry cow therapy (using teat sealer only in healthy cows) for many years. Hopefully this will help those of you who may be just starting on this journey or who are concerned about moving away from blanket dry cow therapy.



## Drying off Checklist



Don't just stop using dry cow antibiotics on all your herd! Get advice from your vet on which cows no longer need an antibiotic and could be dried off with teat sealer only. Start with a small number of cows to build your confidence. Free veterinary consults are available through AHI. For more information, [click here to visit our website](#).



Do as many milk recordings as you can (ideally 6) throughout the lactation and use the records- having as much information as possible is key, including records of clinical cases, lab results etc.



Carry out a milk recording within one month of drying off and if you are drying off over an extended period then you should consider doing two. This will give you the most up-to-date information on the infection status of each cow. Discuss with your vet what SCC threshold is suitable to use to identify cows in your herd that need a dry cow antibiotic.



Clip tails and ideally udders, this will make it easier to tube cows cleanly and help keep udders clean and dry during the high-risk times when housed.



Manage cows so their milk yield has reduced before dry off, ideally to less than 15L/day.



When drying off, get in the zone! Concentration is essential and any distractions have the potential to cause problems- do it as a separate job when you are not hungry!

## Drying off Checklist



Dry off cows in batches according to treatment; for example, if cows are getting teat sealer only, do them separately from those getting antibiotics and earlier on while you are still enthusiastic!



Have all your equipment ready; a head torch makes it much easier to see if the teats are properly prepared and where the tube needs to be inserted.



Have a system for teat preparation and sterilization and stick to it. Clean teats and sterilize them thoroughly using cotton wool soaked in surgical spirits or the alcohol wipes that come with the tubes.



Having help, even a small person to hand you the tubes, can make a huge difference.



Only do a small number of cows at one time- most of the problems occur where too many cows are done at once and there is not enough attention to detail in sterilizing the teats and the parlour is harder to keep clean.



Weather permitting, leave cows in a dry paddock after drying off as it is easier to keep them clean, but monitor at least once daily.



Having enough cubicles for the number of cows you have, with mats in good condition is essential. Overcrowding and damaged mats increase the risk of mastitis.



Review your scrapers; book a scraper service and carry out any last-minute repairs in advance of housing. Don't wait until there are animals in the shed as muck builds up very quickly when scrapers aren't working properly!



Lime dry cow cubicles at least once per day, ideally twice during the dry period. If labour is an issue on-farm, consider investing in a mechanical means for liming as it will make it easier and quicker to lime, which can be physically difficult on your body. Keeping cubicles as clean as possible should be seen as a priority job. Also wear goggles and a mask to protect your eyes and lungs.

