

Try not to let your mastitis control slip!

Finola McCoy, CellCheck Programme Manager

At this time of year, a lot of you will be tired from a busy calving season and the last thing you will want to read is another list of jobs that you must do or grief for not doing certain jobs properly! So this article is a gentle reminder of some important facts to help reduce the risk of mastitis around calving.

The period around calving is the highest risk period for mastitis to occur. And is a critical time in determining the level of herd infection for the rest of lactation. Therefore, the milk quality for the whole season depends on success of mastitis control around calving. Cows are more susceptible to infections at this time as their natural defence mechanisms are low. This allows new infections to occur or subclinical infections which have persisted through the dry period to flare up into clinical cases. A build-up in the number of bacteria in the environment as the calving season progresses puts further pressure on the cow's immune system.

Some important tips to help minimise these risks:

1. Calve in a clean environment- keep calving pens clean, fresh and dry. Avoid calving on slats or in cubicles. Outdoor pads must have minimal manure contamination, be sheltered and well drained.
2. Identify clinical cases as soon as possible as early identification reduces the risk of severe cases developing and the risk of spread between other cows and it also reduces the risk of developing chronic infection. Differences between milk and mastitis can be difficult to detect in freshly calved cows, due to the nature of colostrum and transitional milk, so each quarter needs to be carefully checked.
3. Take your time moving and milking freshly calved heifers and cows. Remember at this time, teats are more tender and therefore more susceptible to injury and infection. Ensure all quarters are milked out completely and that sometimes stressed or agitated cows may need a let-down hormone (Oxytocin) prescribed by your veterinary practitioner. Don't use incomplete milking as a method of control of milk fever. Avoid over and under milking.



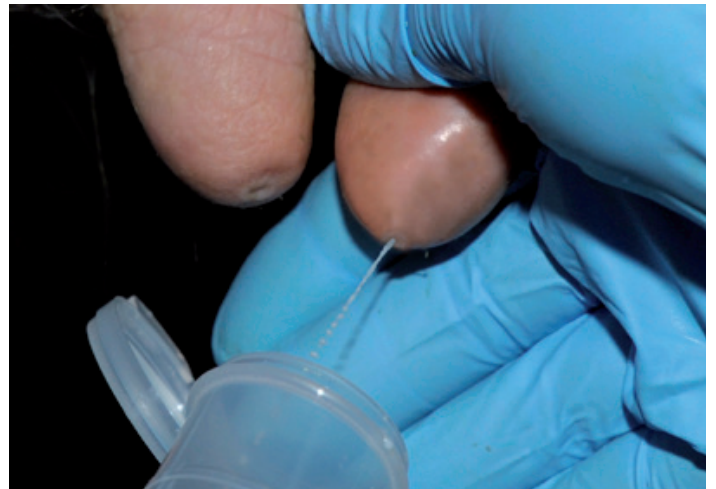
4. Consider collecting milk samples for culture to identify bacteria before treatment starts. These samples can be frozen for up to 4 months and may be submitted for culture later if the number of clinical cases increases.

5. It might sound obvious, but clearly marking treated cows is so important to avoid mistakes, that can easily happen especially when people are tired and busy. Set up a system that works for you and ensure that all regular and relief milking staff are familiar with it. Have a written procedure in a visible location for all staff to see. If antibiotic milk does get into bulk tank, notify your Co-op immediately to avoid being fined.

6. Where possible, milk clinical cases last but if this is not possible sanitise the cluster after milking an infected cow by firstly running water through the cluster for 30 seconds and then dipping in a peracetic acid solution.

7. Record all clinical cases to track mastitis control in your herd. If >5% of your cows get mastitis within the first month of calving, it should be investigated. Consult your veterinary practitioner for advice on appropriate treatment and always complete the course of antibiotics prescribed.

8. After all year-round teat disinfection, milk recording is the next most important tool in dealing with high SCC and mastitis. Milk recording within the first month after calving is very important to monitor how the dry cow season went and to identify cows with high SCC as early as possible in the lactation.



		Treatment	Quantity	Technician	Ref	Withdrawal Period	Ref	Supplier
729	Foul	240	salin					
788	Foul	240	salin					
3065	Foul	240	salin					
2715	?	240	stewage					
2040	(5)							
2704	(5)							
510	(5)							
2808	(6)							
2662	(8)							
2640	(4)							
2840	(2)							
2443	(2)							
332	(5)							
772	(5)							
684	(6)							
754	(3)							
2763	(3)							
260	(2)							
2772	(3)							
744	(4)							
2846	(4)							
3871	(4)							

Handwritten notes on the table include: 'Teat disinfection', 'x2', and '1/2'.

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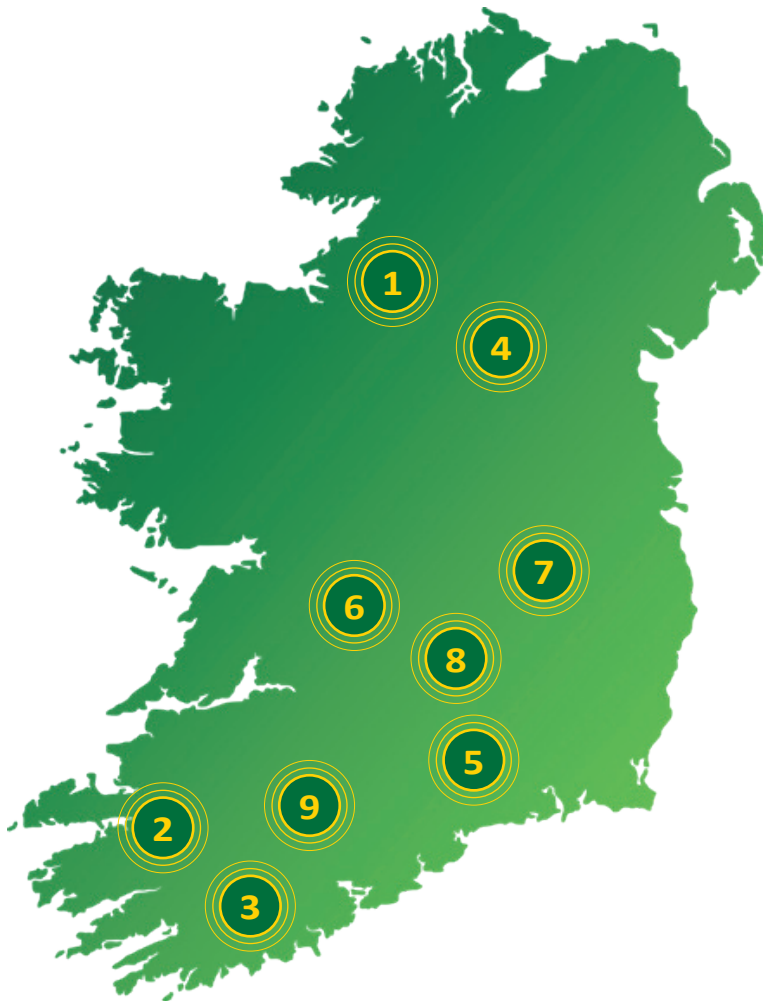
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