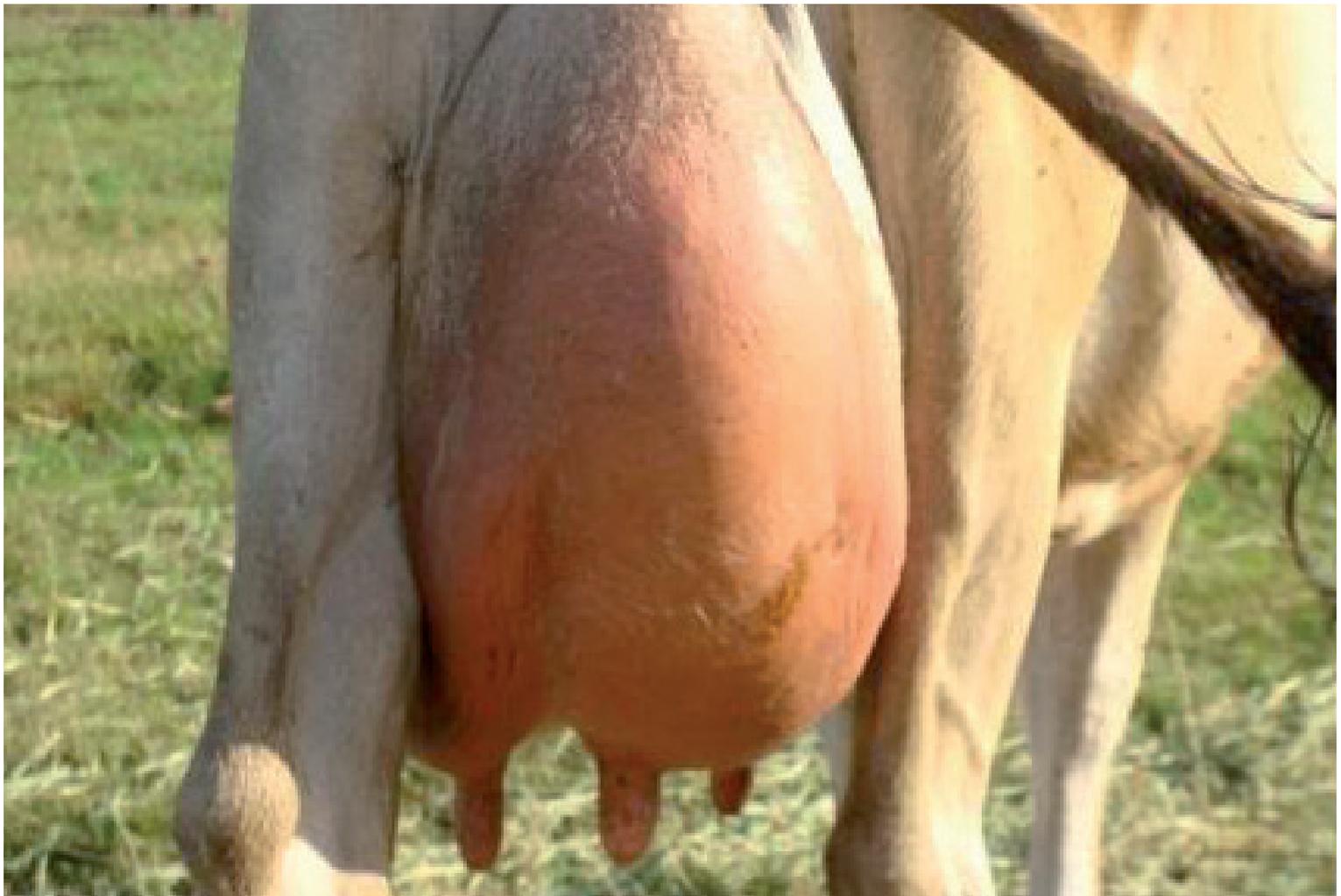




Summer Mastitis

Michelle McGrath, Assistant CellCheck Programme Manager

Summer mastitis is a disease that has changed little over the years, affecting the same farms year after year and often just certain fields within those holdings. It is an acute disease of the non-lactating mammary gland and is mainly caused by the bacterium *Trueperella pyogenes* (formerly known as *Arcanobacterium pyogenes*). Other bacteria can increase the severity of the disease and allow the infection to establish more readily. Flies are considered central to its transmission and hence the association with summer. It is a serious condition and can be fatal if not treated promptly. Often the first clinical sign is stiffness when the animal is walking. Other signs include a swollen, painful teat or quarter, and can be easily identified by careful observation, particularly when flies become attracted to it. In most cases, once the bacteria gain entry, they produce toxins which may lead to septicaemia (blood poisoning). As the illness progresses, further signs are swelling of the hind legs, obvious



NATIONAL MASTITIS CONTROL PROGRAMME
Animal Health Ireland, 2-5 The Archways, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, N41 WN27

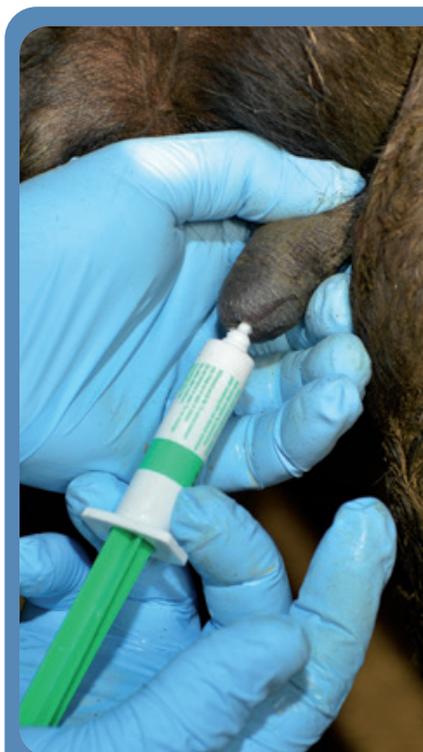


lethargy and separation from the herd, abortion and even death. Some cows wall off the infection without showing any signs. Eventually in these cases, pus may burst out through the skin from the abscess formed within the affected quarter.

Very few affected quarters recover, and treatment is aimed at saving the animal and the pregnancy. Treatment is most often via regular and repeated stripping of the affected quarter, to remove as much infected material as possible. This is combined with anti-inflammatories, and antibiotics, both intramammary and injectable. Oral or intra-venous fluids may be necessary depending on how sick the cow is. Getting antibiotics to where they are needed is a challenge, as a large amount of pus is present, hence the importance of anti-inflammatory drugs. Heifers and cows with summer mastitis are best isolated to prevent the spread of the mastitis between animals.

Various management practices can be put in place to help reduce the incidence of summer mastitis. Firstly, the importance of having good fly control measures in place cannot be over emphasised. Flies should be controlled from early in the fly season using products containing synthetic pyrethroids which are available in pour-on preparations, or impregnated fly tags. Depending on the product used it may need to be repeated regularly during the summer season. Also, the application of fly repellents around the udder area, such as traditional Stockholm tar and teat spray help reduce the number of flies attracted to the cow's udder. Secondly, it is important to try to avoid grazing cows/in-calf heifers in fields that have a history of summer mastitis incidences. These tend to be fields that are near rivers or marshy areas or where there is a high density of trees/ hedges where flies tend to populate. More exposed pastures are preferred as high winds inhibit fly activity.

Observing and checking animals on a regular basis is essential as the earlier the mastitis is detected the better the prognosis. Good hygiene measures at drying off and the use of teat sealers are essential control measures to minimise disease as the teat seal plugs the teat, preventing bacterial transfer from the environment and especially from flies. Previously, the use of dry cow intra-mammaries has been suggested as a preventive measure. While this has shown to be an effective practice, it needs to be thought about carefully considering the importance of prudent antibiotic use. It is critical to discuss any potential antibiotic use with your veterinary practitioner.



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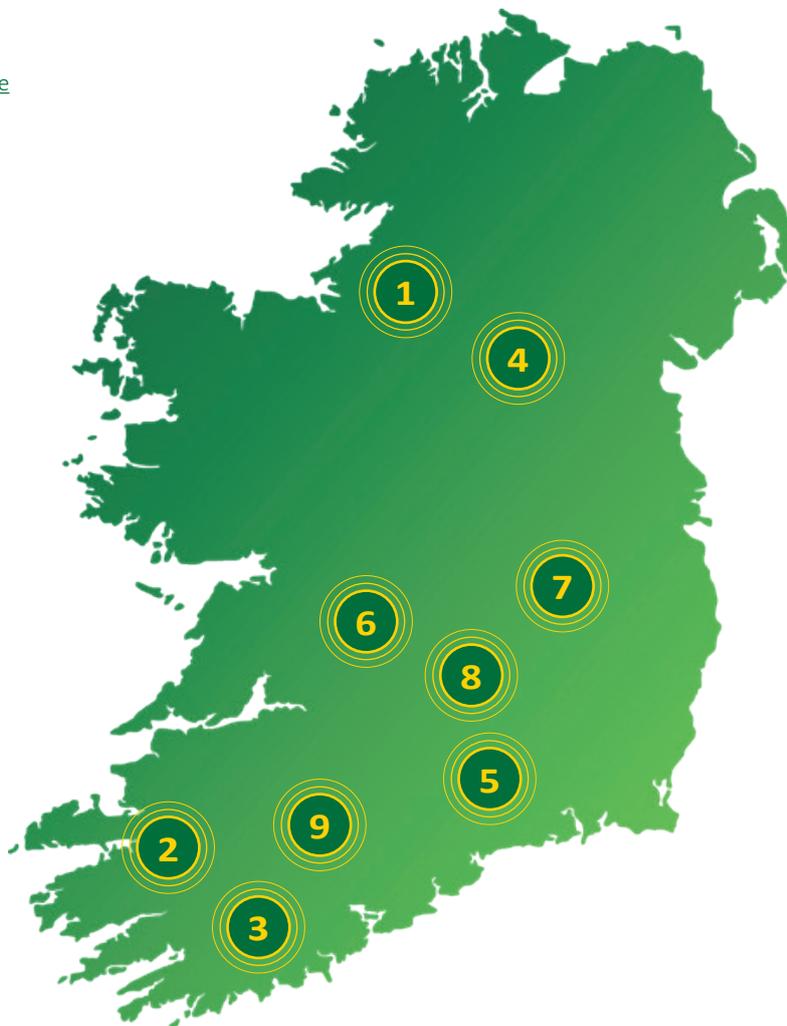
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