



VETS ON ALABAMA DAIRY NEWS

MARCH 2013

March has proven to be very dry, with no significant rain through the later part of summer and into the start of Autumn. As we experience drier than usual conditions for this time of the year the potential for having to think about drying off early is ever present. With early dry off comes an extended dry period and the approach required to ensure your dairy herd is managed correctly through the dry period should be discussed with your veterinarian. This will ensure that the best animal health & management solutions are applied to your herd.

Mastitis Issues

Feedback from our Spring consults in 2012 indicated that the most serious disease concern among farmers was mastitis. While conditions are dry, clinical mastitis has increased and somatic cell counts have risen.

Most of the isolates coming in are Strep. uberis with various resistances. In amongst these cases are some chronic Staph aureus cases. The reason for these Strep. uberis cases could relate to:

- Crop grazing with increased soil contact.
- Longer milking interval with longer periods with milk sitting in the gland.
- Increased resting phase with ground contact.
- More dilated teat canal due to milk pressure.

What should you do?

1. If somatics are rising and more clinical cases are occurring please take some milk samples so that we can help you to achieve a more effective treatment and ensure a good understanding of the disease process.
2. Somatic cell count history is a useful tool to assess causes, treatment options and likely success rates.
3. Inspection of udders and teat health and condition.

Talk to us before you embark on expensive treatment approaches that could result in low success rates.

For example, treating high somatic cell count cows with antibiotics will not lead to an immediate reduction in cell count.



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Dry Cow Therapy (DCT)

Cows dried off early need to look at long acting + teat sealing. This is especially important if you are looking at a dry period of greater than 100 days! Most infections post calving are believed to have originated from the dry period.

The goals of DCT

- To cure existing infections at dry off.
- To prevent new infections at dry off and throughout the dry period.
- Protect against mastitis and reduce new infections around the calving period.
- Reduce somatic cell count(SCC) and mastitis into the subsequent lactation.

The use of DCT and the treatment of intramammary infection has been the cornerstone of mastitis management and control for many years.

However there has been a dramatic change in the incidence and causes of clinical and subclinical mastitis;

- Reflected in a decrease in the prevalence of contagious mastitis pathogens and an increase in the importance of the environmental pathogens such as *S. uberis*.
- These changes have necessitated a rethink for the use of antibiotics in mastitis control.
- Whilst the dry period offers the best opportunity to remove existing, persistent intramammary infections, it unfortunately also contains periods of high risk for the development of new infections¹.



- ✓ In order to achieve the best cure rates it is important to select the appropriate antibiotic in light of the prevailing mastitis on individual dairy units.
- ✓ Whilst selection of the correct therapy is vital to ensure other aspects of dry cow management are optimised, it is important to ensure that good cure rates are translated into uninfected quarters at calving by minimising the risk of new intramammary infection; the use of other products such as internal teat sealants should be considered.
- ✓ It is essential to have an adequate monitoring system in place to ensure that the therapy and management selections made are delivering the expected performance¹.

Summary

Drying off your herd is an important part of the dairy farm management calendar, the decisions that are made around, when to dry off and what DCT to use can have a large impact on next season. It is therefore important that you have a DCT consult which will allow you to discuss your particular herd with us. From there we can draw up a plan for your farm to ensure that all considerations have been looked at and evaluated.

Please get in contact with Vets On Alabama to book your DCT consult with Nick Hansby or Keith Webby. These can be completed anytime from now on.

1. Bradley AJ. Proceedings of the Bayer 2013 Dairy Symposium, 2013, 2-13

