

Drying-off - the key to a better run next lactation

Treatment at drying-off is the best opportunity to reduce cell counts and clinical mastitis next lactation.

After wet, humid conditions there may be more infected quarters in your herd than usual and you should consider a blanket approach to Dry Cow Treatment (all quarters of all cows at drying off).

Using a combination of Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment (to cure) and Teat Sealant (to protect) is likely to give the best results.

If your herd has had more mastitis this year than usual, or you have hosted or sent cows on cow parking arrangements, it is essential you achieve the best possible results at drying-off.

A good drying-off strategy will reduce cell counts and clinical mastitis next year by:

- curing cows with existing mastitis infections, and
- protecting clean cows from new infections through to calving.

Protection is especially important when conditions are wet and muddy.

Talk with your vet to set your drying-off plan for this year.

Blanket Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment is likely to be appropriate if you have had:

- ***Bulk Milk Cell Counts above 250,000***
- ***More than 2 cases of clinical mastitis per 100 cows per month***
- ***Culture results of either Strep ag or Strep uberis***
- ***Any of your cows milked on another farm, or you milked other people's cows milked in your herd***

New observations in Australian herds have shown very significant reductions (approximately 70%) in mastitis at calving, and in cell counts next season after using a combination of Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment and Teat Sealants in all cows.

This is more expensive, and a larger job (all quarters receive two intramammary tubes) but can be a great investment to lower mastitis next lactation.

For example investment in Teat Sealant (at approximately \$10 per cow) is quickly recouped if the number of clinical cases next lactation (costing \$250 each) is reduced by 70%. The reduced stress for you is a great bonus.

This combination approach must be planned in conjunction with your veterinarian.

Checklist for Drying-off Plan

STOP - the udder needs a clear message to stop making milk

SEAL – each teat needs a quick, clean seal in the teat canal. A natural seal takes days, a Teat Sealant operates immediately.

HEAL – the udder needs time to remove and repair milk producing tissue, and help from antibiotics to remove infections

Get the timing right

- What **length dry period** do you want? There are issues such as feeding, cow condition and time for staff holidays to consider. You may decide to dry-off high cell count cows early.
- How accurately you can **estimate calving dates**? Do you have preg test records?
- How will you manage cows to dry off when they are producing between **5 and 12 litres per day**?
- What's required to ensure that newly treated cows can go to a **clean location**?

Get everything you need ready

- Have you discussed the **choice of products** with your veterinarian and purchased what you need – tubes, teat wipes etc?

Get the administration technique right

If Dry Cow Treatment or Teat Sealant is administered poorly it can carry bacteria into the udder. So it is essential to get it right.

- Do you have sufficient time/people allocated? Plan to **do batches** – to do the job well you can only treat about 20 cows per hour.
- Can everyone who is involved do the job well? **Provide a training session** for anyone administering Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment or Teat Sealant or both.

After the cows are treated.....

- Will the cows go into a **clean area for at least a week** after Dry Cow Treatment. Never put them in areas that have had effluent spread.
- Don't transport cows immediately** if you can help it. If cows must be transported or walked, will you use a Teat Sealant?
- What procedure will you use for **checking cows** for swollen quarters for the next week. Who will do it? How? When? Preferably don't bring cows back through the shed.
- How will you deal with cows that **leak milk**?

Guide for Drying-off Technique

Plan to **do batches** – to do the job well you can only treat about 20 cows per hour.

Milk out completely before Dry Cow Treatment.

Minimise the chance that teats will get contaminated with dirt after treatment. Set up so that cows will go into a clean area and not lie down for at least an hour after treatment. Never put cows in an area that has had effluent spread on it in the previous 3 months.

Follow this procedure:

- ✓ Wear disposable **gloves**
- ✓ **Sterilise the teat end** by rubbing it with teat wipes or cotton balls and 70% alcohol.
- ✓ Insert the nozzle of the **ANTIBIOTIC tube part way into the teat**, infuse the contents, then massage the quarter.
- ✓ Insert the nozzle of the **TEATSEAL tube part way into the teat**.

To keep the product within the teat cavity and canal (rather than in the udder) **gently squeeze the top of the teat closed** while the contents of the tube are infused into the teat canal. **After Teatseal, do not massage the quarter.**



If using Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment and Teat Sealant, prepare and treat each teat at a time, rather than preparing 4 teats and then treating them all. This reduces the risk of contamination.

- ✓ **Teat dip or spray the whole surface** of all teats after treatment. Use Ready-To-Use product or make up a fresh mix of teat disinfectant for this job.
- ✓ **Mark each cow** with a waterproof method so she can't be milked again by mistake.
- ✓ **Record** the details

TAKE NOTE

The approach for Teat Sealant is different from Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment, because it must remain in the teat and NOT move up into the udder.

Always administer **Teat Sealant LAST**.

NEVER massage the udder after administering Teat Sealant.



X-ray of a teat showing the position of correctly administered teat sealant in the teat cistern and canal.

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