

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – SEPTEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

How Do Your Cows Score

With 400,000 SCC less than a year away it is time to look at your operation and milking techniques to see if improvement is necessary. Dairy farms are unique because efforts to produce a high quality product must occur every day and the task will never be completed.

Manure handling, types of bedding and maintenance of cow stalls are all a significant influence on hygiene. Cleanliness of animal housing has a major influence on the rate of clinical and subclinical mastitis. In general herds with lower SCC have less manure in stalls, stalls are cleaned more frequently, more bedding is used and sawdust is used rather than straw. Straw can get damp and actually cling to udder and flank skin causing increased SCC.

Other factors which affect hygiene of the udder are

- singeing (flaming) the udder hair to reduce the ability to collect debris.
- manure consistency – diets that are higher in starch are lacking fibre and will result in much looser manure and therefore dirtier cows.

Enclosed is a chart. Look at the scoring scheme. Try to look at your cows with an unbiased eye and evaluate your herd.

Attainable goals are:

- 1) Udder hygiene – less than 10% scoring 3 and 4.
- 2) Flank and upper leg – less than 15% at 3 and 4.
- 3) Lower legs – less than 20% at 3 and 4.

Milking practices have an influence on mastitis rates.

<i>Practice</i>	<i>Monthly clinical rate of mastitis</i>	
Written milking routine	yes	5%
	no	7.1%
Milker training	never	9.6%
	Frequently	5.8%
Complete milking routine (forestrip, pre-dip, dry, attach)	yes	5.5%
	No	10.3%
Forestrip	yes	5.8%
	No	9.5%

Looking at these results show that being diligent and complete in your milking habits can have dramatic results in mastitis control. The cost of mastitis for herds over 400,000 bulk tank SCC are about \$250.00 per cow per year. (reduced milk, treatment costs, premature cullings)

At bulk tank SCC of 200-400,000 the cost is \$100 per cow per year.

Dipping versus Spraying

For optimum mastitis control approved pre-dips and post-dips can be applied by dipping or spraying.

Both are effective if done properly – ½ of the barrel of the teat covered completely.

Unfortunately spraying is often done improperly as spray is applied from the side or back of the udder and teats are only marginally covered in dip. An excellent job of spraying requires more time and teat dip than if teats are dipped.

In many cases teat spraying has been used more frequently than teat dipping in mastitis problem herds, suggesting that dipping is the preferred method.

I believe that everyone knows this authors personal view of spraying versus dipping.

