Mastitis control in and after wet conditions

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

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

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 with your herd

New observations in Australian herds have shown 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 $277 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

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.

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.

For more information visit the Countdown Farm Guidelines at www.dairyaustralia.com.au
Guide for drying-off technique

Follow this procedure:

1. Wear disposable gloves.
2. Sterilise the teat end by rubbing it with teat wipes or cotton balls and 70% alcohol.
3. Insert the nozzle of the ANTIBIOTIC tube part way into the teat, infuse the contents, then massage the quarter.
4. Insert the nozzle of the teat sealant tube part way into the teat.
5. To keep the teat sealant 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Mark each cow with a waterproof method so she can’t be milked again by mistake.
9. 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.