

Quick Guide to Troubleshooting Mastitis

Bryan Bastin, Undergraduate, Animal Science
 Kristy H. Campbell, Extension Dairy Specialist, Animal Science

Use these four steps to approach your mastitis situation systematically.

Step One - Determine if there is a mastitis problem

- Problem = if more than 3% of cows have clinical mastitis or are on antibiotic withdrawal
- Use bulk tank milk SCC and DHI SCC to determine subclinical rates and estimate production losses and profit losses using SCC
- High Quality = Average SCC **less than 300,000 cells/ml**
 - Approximately 6% of quarters infected; small loss of production
 - Lowering herd average SCC must be an economical decision
- Average Quality = Average SCC **300,000-400,000 cells/ml**
 - Over 10% of quarters infected; production and profit loss due to subclinical mastitis
 - Lowering herd average SCC should be an economical decision
 - To lower average SCC, focus attention on high SCC groups
- Poor Quality = Average SCC **400,000-600,000 cells/ml**
 - Approximately 16% of quarters infected; significant production and profit loss due to clinical and subclinical mastitis
 - Elevated risk of exceeding regulatory limit
 - Lowering average SCC will have positive economic impact
- Very Poor Quality = Average SCC count **over 600,000 cells/ml**
 - Substantial number of cows infected
 - Substantial production and profit loss
 - Very high risk of exceeding regulatory limits
 - Immediate action needed

Step Two - Identify cause of infections

- Determine which mastitis pathogens cause most infections - contagious or environmental
- Knowing which type of pathogen will help to develop an efficient treatment plan

Step Three - Evaluate the situation

- A third-party should evaluate the farm, management, facilities and equipment for contributors to mastitis problem
- Both types of pathogens (contagious vs. environmental) may require specific evaluations
 - Contagious = parlor and antibiotic therapy evaluations are priority
 - Environmental = environment and antibiotic therapy evaluations are priority
- For a meaningful evaluation, be forthcoming on daily management and farm activities

Step Four - Address the situation

- You cannot solve all problems at once
- Prioritize solutions based on contribution to problem and cost of correcting