

MARCH 2001 – LARGE ANIMAL NEWS LETTER

BANAMINE® CAUTIONS: Recently we were warned by a grade A inspector that milk is being randomly tested for a variety of non-antibiotic medications, including Banamine® and Phenylbutazone® or bute. In addition, slaughter animals are now also randomly being tested for Banamine®. Ordinarily these anti-inflammatories are given to cattle along with some form of antibiotic. However that is not always the case. It is the policy of our practice to recommend a 96 hour milk withhold and a 5 day slaughter hold for Banamine® in dairy animals whether an antibiotic accompanied the medication or not.

MILK QUALITY: Part of a veterinarian's job is to find ways to help increase the profitability of the producers with whom we work with. One way to increase dairy income without increasing milk production is through milk quality; in particular somatic cell count (SCC). Somatic cells are white blood cells in milk from the circulation of the cow. They enter the udder in response to inflammation, infection, or irritation of the mammary gland tissue. Elevated SCC is associated with lower milk quality, as well as lower production for the affected quarters. We all have noticed the lowering of acceptable SCC levels for grade A milk. We can all expect the 'legal limit' for SCC to continue to go lower; perhaps as low as 350-400,000/ml of milk. Legal limits are one reason to lower SCC. However the best reason is because there is money to be made in lower SCC. Check with your dairy to see what the premium difference is for milk at 350,000 vs. under 200,000 SCC. Often the difference amounts to around 45 cents per hundred of milk.

Ordinarily both veterinarians and dairymen don't like to tackle SCC because change in SCC can occur slowly in response to correction attempts. Also the effort to lower SCC may involve more labor, or changes in the way labor is traditionally done.

SCC APPROACH: Lowering SCC should be approached on three levels: dry period efforts, fresh cow efforts, and during the lactation.

As we have previously reported, research proves that the majority of flare-ups in the first 60 days of a lactation have their origin in the dry period. Either cows enter the dry period unprotected from infection, or they are exposed to high environmental bacteria levels during the dry period.

The best way to know what you're fighting is to culture what bacteria are in your cow's udder. We recommend either culturing individual cows as needed, or survey your herd's infection status with a bulk tank milk sample. Many dairies now culture chronic mastitis cows or high SCC cows as they go dry to determine if a specific dry treatment will cure that cow best. The best odds for curing **chronic** infections is at dry off. Otherwise, a bulk tank sample can give you an idea of the general bacterial exposure of your herd and may indicate a specific dry cow treatment to be used in your herd.

Once that cow is dry, remember that the dry tube really only protects that udder for around 14 days. After that time, the cow must be kept as clean as possible to avoid reinfesting the udder. The critical exposure time for mastitis is while the cow is springing up. Many cows become infected at that time, and you suffer for it in the following lactation. Look critically at where your dry cows are housed. How clean is it

really? Are the cows crowded? If your cows are calving with high SCC, maybe we need to work on dry cow housing.

Take a problem solving approach to SCC. Break mastitis into its components and attack each area. The next newsletter will look at fresh cow evaluation: clean a cow up at the beginning of her lactation before she has a chance to flare-up with mastitis.

Remember, **the worst time to try and cure a mastitis case is when she has flared up!**

GVS STAFF

Mike Strobush DVM

Kevin Ratka DVM

Tammy Zickert Recpt

Tara Kranz VA

Al Harmening DVM

Jean Liljegren DVM

Wendy Lindner CVT

Jeff Engrav DVM

Jeannette Bymers Off Mgr

Ginny Mesar VA