

JULY 2001 – LARGE ANIMAL NEWSLETTER

MASTITIS SEASON! This late spring and summer has had some of the worst weather for promoting mastitis. Excessive rain, high humidity, and now heat are all of the ingredients needed to really let bacteria grow. Somatic cell counts (SCC) are jumping and cows are flaring up with mastitis. Take action to minimize the weather's impact on your cows. A number of options are available to minimize the summer's effects.

J5 vaccinate cows strategically to protect them from severe coliform mastitis. We design J5 vaccination programs. The cows then tell us if the program is adequate. If your cattle are telling you there is a weakness, let's work to adjust your vaccination program.

Moisture control is crucial. Bacteria grow very poorly under dry conditions. Scrape alleys and stalls frequently to lower moisture accumulation in your barn. Adding adequate, good dry bedding further absorbs moisture. Spreading a small amount of barn lime at the back end of stalls serves to help dry that area while changing pH to further slow bacterial growth. After you scrape away the moisture, run the barn cleaner to get it out of the barn. Standing water will just add to barn humidity.

How often do you need to do these things? I suppose as often as it takes. Whatever you can do to lower moisture and humidity levels will help to slow the growth of bacteria. If the cow environment is wet, then more needs to be done to dry it out.

Ventilation in your barn will remove humidity. Of course weather conditions will exist where even the best ventilated barn is humid. However as we travel from farm to farm, those stall barns with tunnel ventilation tend to be the driest. Tunnel ventilation systems, if properly sized, serve to move a large volume of air through your barn, removing excessive moisture while providing a breeze to improve cow comfort. Yes the air you are pulling through the barn from outside is also humid. However cows primarily eliminate heat from their bodies by breathing. Breathing allows them to exhale large amounts of moisture loaded warm air. Thus the air in the barn where the cows live will be much more humid than the air outside. Removing this air will allow the cows to better cool themselves while drying out the environment. I don't believe I have met the dairyman who regretted putting in fans. Those people generally enjoy better cow comfort, feed intakes, and cow productivity.

Clean dry teats reduce mastitis levels. Every surface in your barn is humid and has bacteria growing on it. That includes the cow teats. Do what you can to clean and disinfect those teat surfaces prior to putting a milker on them. Pre-dip teats, allow adequate time for the dip to kill bacteria (generally 30 seconds), wipe teats dry with a clean single use towel, and attach the unit. After the cow is finished milking there is a thin film of milk left on the teat for bacteria to grow on. Post-milking dip that teat to disinfect the area and reduce bacterial growth between milkings.

As you can see, controlling the harmful effects of bacteria involves **breaking the cycle of bacterial growth**. Whatever you can do to reduce moisture levels and avoid carrying bacteria from one cow to the next will help reduce the effects of those bacteria.

Does it seem like we ask a lot from dairymen for their cows? Maybe, but our job is to provide you the information available to improve conditions and productivity for your cows. **Read the information** and apply what you can to your operation.

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