



## Quality Watch

By Gary Trimmer

Director of Member Services/Quality Control

### Update on Laboratory Services

Results of an MMPA member survey conducted this summer by our MSU Food Systems Fellowship Student, Tracy Petzke, revealed a need to review the laboratory services currently available to MMPA members and suggested additional services MMPA could provide for members.

Several member farms on the survey indicated a strong desire to have MMPA provide on-farm mastitis culturing training. Interest in this area has grown due to dairy farmers' increasing desire to quickly address mastitis issues. As a result, MMPA is evaluating and determining the scope and magnitude of an on-farm culturing program for members. We plan to evaluate MMPA's role in training, culturing techniques, interpreting results and supplying necessary equipment, (i.e. incubators and culturing equipment).

We are also looking into expanding our current mastitis culturing program in the Novi laboratory. Many milk sample cultures are currently sent to the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health (DCPAH) for species determination, a process that can take one to two weeks to obtain results. An increasing number of producers and veterinarians are interested in learning the drug sensitivity of mastitis causing bacteria in infected cows and that testing is also conducted through DCPAH. While this test is available to producers, it is impor-

tant to remember that veterinarians should interpret drug sensitivity results to ensure proper dosage.

The survey also pointed out a need for additional pre-incubated (PI) counts on bulk tank samples. Currently, MMPA conducts one monthly bulk tank sample for pay purposes under MMPA's quality policy payment program. One test per month does not provide members adequate information to monitor the effectiveness of their milking equipment and bulk tank cleaning program. For that reason, we encourage all members to submit bulk tank samples to the Novi laboratory for PI counts at least once a week, at no additional cost.

This additional PI sample process involves your milk hauler taking an additional sample, properly identifying it with your label and writing "SPECIAL" or "PI" across the vial lid, as well as completing the orange color-coded card designated for tank PI count specials. The card must be placed with the producer samples when the hauler arrives at the dairy. The card flags the Novi laboratory technicians that a special test is requested. If no card accompanies the sample, the technicians will not know a special is being requested since all samples are mixed together.

Proper identification on the sample and card is critical to allow the technicians to know who requested the test and what kind of

test is requested. The cards are available to haulers at the dairies. Members can also acquire them through their member representative.

The special PI test is handled the same as the official pay test; however, the test result is only used to help producers monitor their PI counts and is not reflected in official MMPA quality results. There is no charge for MMPA members on special bulk tank tests for PI counts. This program has been in place for several years to help maintain high quality standards demanded by our fluid milk customers. Results of PI count specials are available immediately after testing on the Internet, and can also be faxed or e-mailed upon request. If a member receives their results through the United States Postal Service, it could take one to two weeks, so we recommend having the results electronically sent or faxed.

Updates on the services MMPA provides and plans to enhance them will be featured in future Quality Watch articles as was requested in the survey. If you have any questions or comments, please contact your member representative or the Novi office.