



Quality Watch

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Changes to MMPA's Milk Quality and Drug Policies

At their June Board meeting, the MMPA Board of Directors approved changes to MMPA's Milk Quality and Drug Residue Policies. As of June 1, 2009, MMPA members will no longer be disqualified for MMPA somatic cell count (SCC) premium for causing a rejected load shipment, high load count shipment or positive drug residue shipment. Members will continue to lose their raw and pre-incubated bacteria count premiums if they cause a rejected load shipment, high load count shipment or positive drug residue shipment and will continue to be responsible for the entire loss incurred involving those loads.

When MMPA originally established the Milk Quality and Drug Residue Policies for rejected loads, the cooperative did not have any SCC premiums. Over time, MMPA SCC premiums levels have increased to today's maximum of 55 cents per cwt., which creates a higher penalty for members with lower SCCs; if they cause rejected loads.

The Board felt this change was necessary to make rejected load penalties more equitable for all members. For example, in the last few months, two members had positive drug residue shipments. One member lost 30 cents per cwt. in SCC premiums and the other member did not qualify for any SCC

premiums. This exact same scenario and penalty difference happened to two other members who caused rejected load shipments. Members having the lower SCCs paid a much higher penalty for the rejected loads. The Board felt these scenarios were unfair and should be addressed. The MMPA Quality and Drug Residue Policies on page 33 of this *Messenger* outlines the new policy.

Today, more MMPA farms are producing higher quality milk and qualifying for more quality premiums than ever before. On another positive note, the number of rejected loads for quality and drug residue shipments continues to decrease. The number of high load count shipments has continually decreased from an average of one per month over the past few years to one shipment over the current fiscal year. Rejected load shipments for poor quality have decreased from an average of one per month to one every other month. The average number of positive drug residue shipments also continues to decrease, from an average of three per month over the last two years to an average of 2.5 per month since October 2008.

MMPA members are making progress in all quality areas, but we are increasingly challenged to do better. Dairy plants are screening and rejecting loads with increasing scrutiny, demanding very high

quality standards. They are paying more attention to seals, sediment in tanker domes, color and odor. Some dairies are even screening loads for blood cells and a very old quality standard called "ropyness." Some dairies are even looking at Total Coliform Count. These additional and tighter screening criteria are challenging for all involved and keep all of us pointed in one direction—producing high quality milk.

The steady decline of dumped loads due to poor quality and positive drug residue is testament to MMPA members' continual vigilance and commitment to produce the best quality milk possible. In addition to the reduction in the number of positive drug residues and poor quality loads, members' excellence in producing high quality milk is shown by MMPA's overall SCC average in May of 207,000 and in April of 212,000. This is an outstanding accomplishment by our members. MMPA has one of, if not the best, milk supplies in the United States.

Congratulations to MMPA's members for an outstanding job especially during this stressful economic time!