



Quality Watch

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Meeting the New EU Requirement

In last month's Quality Watch, Gary Trimner wrote about changes in somatic cell computation for the European Union (EU). Basically, all farms with milk going into plants doing business (whether directly or indirectly) with the EU must have a bulk tank somatic cell count (SCC) less than 400,000 cells/ml. While the great majority of MMPA members maintain their bulk tank SCC well below this level, some members will soon need to make some changes.

MMPA offers its members a number of services to address mastitis issues. MMPA Member Representatives are trained to evaluate udder prep procedures as well as cattle housing. A number of member reps are also trained to perform a milking system evaluation based on NMC protocol. MMPA also offers milker training schools in February and March each year. In addition, schools can be provided on the farm any time of year if there is adequate space to set up the school and at least 15 people are in attendance. Smaller farms may want to host a school with their neighbors. Members wishing to do this may contact Tom Herremans or the Novi office.

MMPA continues to offer laboratory services to help members identify cows with mastitis. In addition to providing SCC information, the lab screens for common mastitis pathogens. For years, MMPA screened for *S. agalactiae*, strep non-ag, *S. aureus* and coagulase negative

staph. This past June, MMPA also began screening for gram negative bacteria. This group includes many bacteria that are found in the farm environment such as *Klebsiella*, *E. coli*, *Pseudomonas*, and *Serratia*. At this point, the culture results will indicate the growth of gram negative bacteria (not the specific genus and species). For herds where speciation information would be valuable, producers should consider further testing at a diagnostic lab through the local veterinarian (if applicable) or the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health (DCPAH). MMPA also recommends sending in several bulk tank samples to DCPAH for Bacteriology and/or *Mycoplasma* culturing to determine whether the herd is infected with a more unusual mastitis pathogen(s).

With this herd culture information along with milking procedure and housing evaluations, a mastitis management plan can be developed. A mastitis management plan may have both long and short-term goals. It is most effective when the farm's entire management team is involved in its development. One of the short-term goals is to develop a treatment plan for the infected cows (culling may be the only option depending on the pathogen). The most effective treatment programs are developed in conjunction with the herd veterinarian. Cows not likely to respond to treatment, particularly if the pathogen can easily spread from cow to cow during the milking

process, will need to be segregated. The purpose of segregation is to ensure that cows are either milked last or with separate milking equipment.

Limiting the mastitis management plan to treatment or culling will not lead to long term success. If the mastitis management plan does not address preventing new mastitis infections, there will always be another high SCC cow to replace the one that was just treated or culled.

Most long-term goals are geared toward mastitis prevention and may include changes in the milking routine to improve teat sanitation or milk letdown. The cattle housing evaluation may indicate issues with overpopulation, stall grooming, ventilation, and/or alley scraping frequency that need to be addressed. Some of these changes may require a capital investment. All of them will require a change in management.

Ultimately, reducing the bulk tank SCC is going to require a commitment from everyone involved. A lack of buy-in to the entire mastitis management plan over the long term will reduce the effectiveness of the plan and make it more difficult to reach the SCC goal. Contact your MMPA Member Representative or the Novi office for more information on developing a mastitis management plan for your operation.