



Quality Watch

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400,000 is the New Somatic Cell Count Standard

MMPA has revised its quality standards for somatic cell count (SCC) at the farm level by lowering the acceptable level from 500,000 to 400,000. MMPA Member Representatives have already begun calling on member farms having a monthly SCC average greater than 400,000 to assist with mastitis management strategies and reducing bulk tank SCC. There is no change to MMPA's SCC pay rate schedule at this time. The adjustment in MMPA quality standards reflects changes in marketing requirements for the European Union (EU).

USDA recently announced that effective October 1, 2010 new requirements will take effect for export certification of dairy products or food products containing dairy ingredients to the EU. The USDA requirements stipulate that any farm supplying milk for manufacture to this market must maintain an SCC of 400,000 or less.

The EU requirement that dairy imports meet this standard has been in effect for several years. Historically, the 400,000 SCC level was calculated at the milk receiving plant based on the load sample results. MMPA had no problem meeting that requirement since nearly all MMPA loads are less than 400,000. However, now all farms must be at 400,000 SCC or less to meet the new requirements in order

for MMPA to continue supplying milk to customers who require EU certification. Our Ovid and Constantine raw milk supply must also meet the requirement because these plants supply manufactured products to customers requiring EU certification. MMPA is among many cooperatives that found it necessary to adjust quality standards to meet those requirements. In fact, nearly all milk handlers will need to meet the new requirements.

In addition to meeting the EU requirements, one of MMPA's fluid raw milk customers will reduce their maximum SCC standard for raw milk to 250,000 on all loads. Effective September 1, 2010, loads exceeding 250,000 SCC will be excluded from that customer's milk supply. MMPA will be working diligently with our members to ensure our members' and customers' needs are met.

The adjustment in the milk quality standard at the farm level does not affect the legal SCC level under the Grade A Pasteurized Milk Ordinance. That level remains at 750,000. However, it is important to note that there appears to be significant pressure to lower the level, an issue that will likely be debated at the 2011 National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments next May.

The good news is that MMPA's overall SCC level continues to improve. For the last several

months, MMPA's average SCC as noted in the Manager's Report has consistently been less than 200,000. The new SCC standard of 400,000 will impact only approximately 15 percent of our member farms.

MMPA will be placing special emphasis in helping members lower their SCC to 400,000 between now and October 1, 2010 and will continue to assist members in continuing to lower SCC on their farms. MMPA offers a variety of services to help obtain lower SCC including: Milking Systems Performance Assurance Program, Herd and Cow Culturing, Milker Training Schools, On-Farm Milker Evaluation, and Cattle Housing Evaluations.

MMPA is committed to meeting the new quality standards and will work with our members to meet the needs of the marketplace. If you have any questions or need assistance please contact the Member Services Department at the Novi office or your MMPA Member Representative.