

# Texas Dairy Matters

*Higher Education Supporting the Industry*

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## COMBAT SUMMER SCC

Ellen R. Jordan, Ph.D.  
Extension Dairy Specialist  
Department of Animal Science  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services  
The Texas A&M University System

Seasonal changes occur with somatic cell counts (SCC). The Texas Milk Market Administrator reports July, August and September usually have the highest counts with a second peak occurring in January. Increased SCC translate into decreased milk production, followed by falling revenues and lower profits.

Some attribute higher counts in late summer to a greater percentage of the herd in late lactation. However, other factors also impact SCC. As more herds use water for heat abatement, water pools and wet areas create new reservoirs for organisms which cause mastitis and areas for flies to develop.



Check the following areas to minimize the SCC rise in the summer:

- Adjust the water flow for the fans.
- Review proper milking procedures and techniques with milkers.
- Milk high SCC cows last.
- Provide milkers individual cow towels to reduce the spread of mastitis.
- Use gloves for the milkers.
- Implement biosecurity methods for your herd, including culturing cows for mastitis organisms prior to purchasing.
- Know the SCC status of herds from which you buy replacements.
- Make sure cows have fresh feed available immediately after milking. This encourages them to remain standing to allow keratin plug formation in the teat end.
- Test each cow routinely for SCC. A number of Texas labs provide this service. Monitor changes and take action before a problem develops.
- Use the information from testing to determine if the problem is across the herd or in certain groups of cows.
- Provide fly control in heifers to reduce the infection rate in first-lactation animals.

Controlling SCC can help you gain premiums for higher quality milk. In addition, cows with lower SCC produce more milk. Take the time to monitor levels and adjust management to maintain lower somatic cell counts. It will lead to higher profits.