

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

EVALUATING A DRY COW TREATMENT PROGRAM

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Dry cow treatment is used on most dairies to try to eliminate mastitis infections that began during the preceding lactation and to prevent new infections. There is more to establishing a dry cow program than deciding which antibiotic to use. Develop a standard set of procedures for:

- Determining when to dry cows off
- Disinfecting the teat prior to dry cow treatment.
- Infusing the dry cow antibiotic.
- Sealing the teat end.
- Vaccinating the cow against organisms causing mastitis and other diseases.
- Checking dry cows for mastitis flare-ups.
- Cleaning the lots where dry cows are kept.
- Providing the cleanest calving area possible.
- Ensuring ample bedding in maternity stalls.



No program is complete without monitoring its success. One way to evaluate the success of a dry cow program is to plot the somatic cell count of cows at dry off against their first somatic cell count (SCC) in the new

lactation (Table 1). If a SCC of 200,000 is used to differentiate between cows that do and do not have mastitis, four groups of cows defined as:

- Cows with no mastitis.
- Cows that had mastitis and were cured in the dry period.
- Cows that had mastitis and were not cured by dry cow therapy.
- Cows that became infected in the dry period.

Whether the dry cow program is working can be determined by tracking the percent in each category over time.

Table 1: Effectiveness of mastitis prevention program during the dry period over time.

	9 Mos. Ago, %	6 Mos. Ago, %	3 Mos. Ago, %	Current, %
No Mastitis	54	60	65	72
Dry Cure	18	14	15	12
Chronic Mastitis	12	10	8	6
New Mastitis	16	16	12	10

It is obvious that the mastitis prevention program, put in place nine months ago in this herd, is having an impact. The number of cows without mastitis, both before being dried off and at first test day, has increased. The number of cows with chronic mastitis and acquiring mastitis during the dry period has declined. Although the number of animals being cured has declined, this may actually be the result of fewer cows being dried off with elevated SCC levels.

When making a management change, determine a way to monitor the results to ensure time and money are being spent wisely.