

Improving Bactoscans - going back to basics

Neville Brentnall, P&L's Milking Parlour & Mastitis Specialist Consultant, provides a reminder of some basic technique.

Reducing the loading of environmental bacteria that can enter the bulk milk supply is the key. The methodology is not complex, there just needs to be attention to detail:

- Present clean cows for milking
- Early detection and treatment of mastitis
- A good milking routine with appropriate teat prep
- A well maintained parlour with an efficient wash cycle
- A clean bulk tank with efficient refrigeration

Clean cows should apply both winter and summer. Cows need to be able to lie at will, in well bedded, correctly sized cubicles and straw yards must not be over stocked. Access routes from housing to the parlour (and back) need to be kept clean to reduce muck splash on the udder. Similarly at grass, tracks and field access must be well managed, as well as areas around water troughs.

A cow with mastitis can shed millions of bacteria into the bulk supply and cause high bactoscans, so early detection and prompt treatment is vital.

Teat prep, done correctly all year round, using appropriate pre-milking teat care products, not only reduces the bacterial loading on the teat skin but also helps to condition it. A soft, supple teat skin keeps cleaner and is easier to clean.

The wash cycle is an area that is often over looked and taken for granted. Water volumes and temperature are usually problem areas and are soon exposed during winter when ambient air temperatures are low. Check that the wash up chemistry is correct: i.e. using the correct balance of acid and alkali products

The Bulk Tank needs to be able to cool milk to under 4 degC within 20 minutes of milking: Efficient refrigeration will not reduce the bacterial content of the milk, but will help to prevent bacteria multiplying exponentially. Most tanks are now cleaned by an auto wash system, but never assume that your tank will be washed 100% correctly all of the time! Check it internally, regularly. Some manual cleaning may be necessary.

Sub-optimal wash routines of both the tank and milking system will lead to a build-up of thermotolerant bacteria. Their origin can be traced back to the cow's environment, and being resistant to pasteurisation, can reduce the 'shelf-life' of dairy products in our shops and supermarkets. Consequently, all milk producers need to be very aware of the affect that the quality of their milk will have beyond the farm gate.

Neville Brentnall

If you want to know more about improving your milk yield, contact P&L and arrange a farm visit.

Call us today on 01948 880261