



## Mitchell Veterinary Services

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### Pauly Veterinary Clinic

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## PREVENTION IS THE BEST WAY TO CONTROL MASTITIS

The wet weather we have experienced this fall is a major contributor to the increased mastitis cases and higher bulk tank somatic cell counts (SCC) at this time of year. Some udder infections are cured by the cow's own immune system through increased SCC and yet the milk may look normal. Herds can have as high as 50% of mastitis cases that are subclinical and cured by the cow herself without the use of antibiotics. However, it is the other 50% that are seen as hard quarters, sick cows or persistent high SCC. These cows will require treatment at some point if they are to remain in the herd. Left untreated the number of persistently high SCC cows will increase over time leading to an elevated bulk tank SCC.

Each herd has specific risk factors that determine the type of bacteria causing the majority of the mastitis cases. You must culture some cases to identify the bacteria types on your farm and also to determine the proper antibiotic to use. Identifying Staph aureus bacteria in cows is necessary as it is very contagious to other cows in the herd.

Not all cows are at equal risk for mastitis. The highest risk cows are high producing cows, cows with high milk flow rates and those with weakened immune systems. Fresh cows and heat stressed cows definitely have a weaker immune system. The majority of udder infections occur just before calving or in the first week of lactation. If a cow gets mastitis at that time she is 5 times more likely to have mastitis again during the lactation.

A 5 Point Plan to control the number of mastitis cases is as follows

1. Use lots of an effective teat dip
2. Dry treat all quarters of all cows
3. Treat clinical mastitis, record and monitor outcome
4. Cull chronic high SCC cows
5. Milking Equipment Maintenance should be done regularly.

Preventing that first case of mastitis in a cow is key to her future udder health and milk quality. Pay attention to the close up and just fresh cows. Be diligent at identifying cows with mastitis or high SCC. Have management protocols in place to deal with mastitis cases and high SCC cows.

Rick