

## A VET'S VIEW

DEVELOPED in the 1950s, dry cow therapy is an important tool in the fight against mastitis. It has two objectives – to cure existing infections present at drying off and prevent the establishment of new infections during the dry period.

Following drying off, milk production ceases and the mammary tissue goes through a spell of repair and regeneration. Combining this with antibiotic dry cow therapy offers an opportunity to cure any infections which are present, as well as those which might occur during the dry period.

### New infections

Most new infections occur at the start or the end of the dry period. Around 50 per cent of all clinical mastitis cases which occur during the first 100 days of lactation are thought to have been contracted during the dry period. When selecting a dry cow tube therefore, make sure it is active for the entire dry period.

When practising short dry periods it is still important a dry cow tube is used as the udder will have less chance to repair itself. A tube with a short milk withdrawal period after lactation commences is recommended to ensure milk does not have to be discarded for longer than is necessary.

When selecting which dry cow antibiotic tube to use, it helps to have an understanding of the bacteria most common on your farm by sampling bulk and individual cow milk.

Milk recording makes it possible to identify cows which are chronically infected at the point of drying off. Two successive tests of more than 200,000 cells/ml before drying off indicates chronic infection.

Reviewing individual cow SCC data either side of the dry and clinical case records will allow evaluation of the success of mastitis control during the dry period.

There is mixed opinion on how, or whether, to treat chronically infected cows with injectable antibiotics at drying off. While many advisers are against this, all are unanimous early drying off has a place in the treatment of high cell count cows. This practice capitalises on the higher cure rates which can be achieved in the dry period. If early drying off is to be practised, close attention to feeding is needed to ensure cows do not get too fat.

Another option with dry cow therapy and the control of mastitis is to use an internal teat sealant. These must be administered in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines.



By Neil Eastham, Bishopton Veterinary Group

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