ELT
EARLY LACTATION THERAPY

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The last ELT column explained how the newly-introduced ELT principle could change mastitis management on-farm. Here, James Allcock of Lambert, Leonard and May vets, in Cheshire, spends some time discussing step two.

Be consistent and prioritise 'at risk' cows to help tackle mastitis

A legband for rapid visualisation of high risk cows is a useful tool.

James Allcock

What is ELT?

ELT aims to help: maximise cure rates; minimise mastitis recurrence rates and deliver a rapid return to acceptable cell counts and, hence, saleable milk. It is a simple three-step process:

1. Identify animals at high risk of developing mastitis
2. Monitor high risk animals and their records
3. Early identification of clinical cases and early appropriate treatment

Step two: Monitor high risk animals and their records

Once high risk, early lactation cows have been identified, it is important to prioritise those cows in the first 100 days of lactation, regardless of their yield ahead of cows in later lactation. It is worth remembering, should mastitis occur before an animal is confirmed in-calf, there is likely to be a greater economic impact than a case in a pregnant animal. This impact can be seen in ongoing yields and also in reduced fertility. This brings a clear focus to that first 100-day period, and hopefully ensures these cows are prioritised ahead of others.

As Table 1 shows, cows suffering from mastitis before service and before conception had a greater number of days to first service and days open than control animals.

Prioritisation of high risk cows

➤➤ Legband or spray for rapid visual identification
➤➤ Foremilking, visual examination and palpation
➤➤ Clear instructions for parlour workers on early detection

The use of records to monitor cows

Treating some of the milking herd in a different way to others need not be at all complicated, especially if you use a checklist of 'negative milk quality events'.

" Prioritisation of high risk cows means they should be given special attention at every milking and by every parlour worker

JAMES ALLCOCK

What are these? Negative milk quality events could include a series of high composite cell counts in herds which milk record (e.g. more than three consecutive recordings above 200,000 immediately prior to dry-off or two out of the first three recordings above 200,000 immediately after calving in the current lactation, as shown in Graph 1).

Other negative milk quality events would be clinical mastitis cases. Any cow which is to be calved again having suffered three or more clinical mastitis events would certainly appear on the 'risk list' – in some herds the policy might include cows suffering two or more clinical events in their previous lactation.

Other monitoring methods

Prioritisation of high risk cows means they should be given special attention at every milking and by every parlour worker. Putting a legband or a distinctive spray marking on each freshly calved cow for the first few weeks of lactation allows for easy recognition of these animals. For these cows, foremilking (still a legal requirement), visual examination and a brief palpation of the udder should allow rapid identification of any clinical mastitis cases by anyone preparing udders and applying clusters.

Ultimately the success or failure of monitoring cows and keeping records comes down to consistency from everyone involved. The few simply hints highlighted here should be easy and straightforward for anyone to implement.

Monitoring negative milk quality events in previous/current lactation
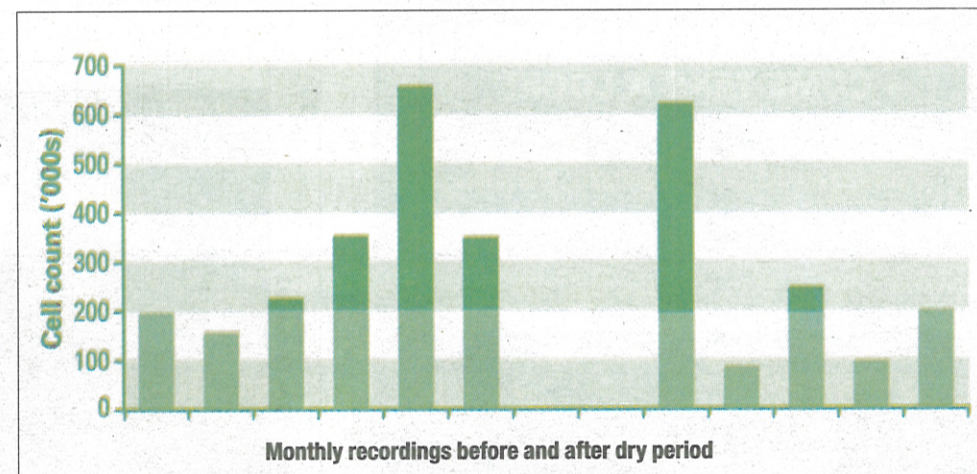
Cell counts
➤➤ More than three consecutive recordings above 200,000 immediately prior to dry-off, or
➤➤ Two out of the first three recordings above 200,000 immediately after calving in the current lactation

Clinical mastitis cases
➤➤ Any cow which is to be calved again having suffered three or more clinical mastitis events in previous lactation

Table 1

GROUP		BURGE STUDY (200 COWS)
Days to 1st service	Control	75.4
	Mastitis before service	86.5
Days open	Control	102.1
	Mastitis before service	119.1
	Mastitis between 1st service and pregnancy	171.3

Graph 1: Individual cell counts before and after the dry period.

Monthly recordings before and after dry period