



# Pfizer Animal Health

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## **In Tough Economic Times, Don't Let Mastitis Become a Leaky Furnace**

By Kevin Zieser, Quality Milk Manager, Pfizer Animal Health

**NEW YORK (June 22, 2009)** — You never know how much a leaky furnace will cost you until a very large utility bill arrives in the mailbox. Even though fixing the furnace would take an investment, the return of efficiency would be worth the cost in the long term.

At a time when income from milk is potentially below production costs, some dairy producers may ponder the idea of cutting back on their mastitis treatment, prevention and testing efforts. But much like that leaky furnace, not fixing a mastitis problem may end up costing you more in the long run.

In fact, an evaluation of mastitis procedures could put money in your pocket. I believe producers can potentially earn additional income per cow as a result of putting more milk in the tank, getting higher premiums from their processors, increasing the cow's lifetime value and improving reproductive success. Here's how a mastitis protocol can benefit your bottom line:

### **1. More milk in the tank**

Subclinical mastitis could be stealing your herd's production because infections are without symptoms. Keep in mind that for every case of clinical mastitis, the National Mastitis Council says there are 15 to 40 cases of subclinical mastitis in the herd.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, prevention and early treatment methods can go a long way in curtailing the damage. Effectively treating subclinical mastitis could put an additional 200 to 400 pounds of milk in the tank during a cow's lactation.<sup>2</sup>

### **2. Receive higher premiums**

Milk quality premiums offer a great motivation for reducing SCCs and producing a higher quality product to earn those premiums. Processors are willing to pay more for quality and producers can often get premiums paid for high milk quality, especially in the Midwest. Currently, there is more milk being produced than processing capacity and some producers may lose a home for their milk. Several processors are currently ranking producers based on milk quality and cheese yield. Those producers with poor milk quality or components will be the first ones to be let go.

### **3. Increased lifetime value of the animal**

Producers may want to consider if they are treating mastitis long enough to get a cure or simply clearing up clinical signs. Failing to fully treat mastitis could lead to a chronic condition that lasts throughout the cow's lifetime. The result will be less lifetime production, more likelihood the cow will be culled early, additional treatment costs and less money in your pocket.

### **4. Cut down culls and increase shipping profit**

If the size of your dairy exceeds capacity, you may need to move some cows to prevent overcrowding. Healthy, high-producing cows can bring in higher income versus a potential cull cow. If a producer has valuable heifers and can sell them for \$1,500, while a cull generates roughly \$500, the producer is potentially earning \$1,000. If a producer can sell high-quality dairy cows and keep his genetics and young heifers on farm and earn additional income, it's a good thing.

#### **5. Improved reproductive success**

The other thing that occurs with clinical mastitis is a reduction in reproductive success. I have observed that cows with mastitis usually see a median difference of about 20 days open, and can reach as high as 50 days open, when compared to cows without incidence. With a cost of up to \$2 per cow for every day open, mastitis takes its toll.<sup>3</sup>

Reviewing your mastitis protocol is important and could end up saving you money while cutbacks could end up costing you big in the long run. The bottom line is, do not let mastitis become a leaky furnace—be proactive and treat smarter. Talk with your veterinarian and ask how to best treat cows for success.

The Pfizer Animal Health Dairy Wellness Plan is a 365-day approach to managing your dairy operation that focuses on the health of the dairy animal, the economic health of the dairy and the proper use of animal health products leading to a safe and healthy food supply.

Pfizer Inc. (NYSE: PFE), the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical company, is a world leader in discovering and developing innovative animal vaccines and prescription medicines. Pfizer Animal Health is dedicated to improving the safety, quality and productivity of the world's food supply by enhancing the health of livestock and poultry; and in helping companion animals live longer and healthier lives. For additional information on Pfizer's portfolio of animal products, visit [www.PfizerAH.com](http://www.PfizerAH.com).

<sup>1</sup>National Mastitis Council. *Current concepts of bovine mastitis*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Madison, Wis.: National Mastitis Council, 1996;1-64.

<sup>2</sup>Raubertas, RF and Shook, GE. Relationship between lactation measures of somatic cell concentration and milk yield. *J Dairy Science* 1982;65:419.

<sup>3</sup>O'Connor, M.L. *Systematic breeding program for dairy cows*. Department of Dairy Animal and Science, Pennsylvania State University 2005.