



Pfizer Animal Health

For more information, contact:

Benjamin Church
Pfizer Animal Health
212-733-6628
benjamin.church@pfizer.com

Jill Spiekerman
Martin|Williams
515-971-9613
j.spiekerman@martinwilliams.com

Treat Smarter, Not Harder

Current economic conditions have producers considering how to get the most bang for their buck

By Mark Kirkpatrick, DVM, Pfizer Animal Health

NEW YORK (June 22, 2009) — One thing you can do to limit costs and maximize milk production is to carefully examine your current mastitis protocols. From my experience, in the average herd, the mastitis incidence rate runs about 20 percent. Dr. Pamela Ruegg, University of Wisconsin, suggests that up to 25 percent of the identified cases will be grade 3 (cases that have abnormal milk, a swollen quarter and a sick cow).¹

If a significant amount of my cases are above that 25 percent benchmark for grade 3 then I as a producer may well be missing or ignoring the grade 1 and 2 clinical cases. Ignoring clinical mastitis doesn't make it go away. Involve your veterinarian in conducting a review of your current mastitis identification and treatment program to better understand your current program.

Early and effective mastitis identification and treatment improves the chances for a positive outcome and limits infection of additional herdmates. As you move forward with your treatment program there are some "rules of the road" that you, your veterinarian and treatment crew need to agree on. Establishing the rules allows the farm to create treatment protocols. It is absolutely critical for treatment success to follow the protocol in terms of dose and duration of treatment. Dr. Alfonso Lago, University of Minnesota, in an evaluation of clinical mastitis cases suggested some rules for consideration.²

If you have monthly somatic cell count testing, was she above or below 200,000 cell count prior to her mastitis case?

If she was below a 200,000 cell count, you have a reasonable chance at having a successful outcome. The only exception is a cow that has had mastitis two times already; the success rate drops by half for the third time though. If a cow is greater than 200,000 cell count prior to her current clinical case, the following rules come into play.

What lactation is the cow in?

Lactation 1 and early Lactation 2 individuals potentially have a greater opportunity for treatment success. If it is a later lactation animal, think about current number of times of mastitis, milk production, value of the cow, etc. If the cow's milk production is worth the investment, you, with your veterinarian's advice, might want to consider extended therapy to improve the chances for a bacteriological cure. Alternatively, the animal may be a cull.

Consider how many days in milk the cow is

If the cow is 150 days or fewer in milk, treatment should be considered because there is a lot of lactation left. If the cow is late in lactation, consider alternates such as possibly drying her up early.

Know the number of times the cow has been treated previously

If the cow has been treated two or more times during a single lactation, she should be considered a poor treatment risk. You might consider alternatives such as not administering additional treatment, kill a quarter or dry up early.

Other factors to consider before treating

If the cow has a low relative herd value and is constantly producing below-average milk or has other strikes against her, a producer might want to consider other options, including culling.

Effective herd management of mastitis is a constant ongoing battle that is subject to weather, immune system status, organism type and infective status of the herd. Take the herd off auto-pilot. Get your herd veterinarian involved with your program and review where you are at. Define the “rules of the road” that will allow you to treat smarter not harder. It pays dividends in higher milk yield and reduced somatic cell counts; both being assets that keep you in the game during these difficult economic times.

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.

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¹Ruegg, Pam. On farm culturing for better milk quality, in *Proceedings*. 9th Western Dairy Management Conference March 12, 2009;149-159.

²Lago, A., Rhoda, D., Cook, N.B. Clinical mastitis treatment decisions and cure monitoring using DHIA SCC data, in *Proceedings*. 37th Annu Conv Am Assoc Bovine Pract 2004;187.

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Pfizer Inc. • 685 Third Avenue, MS 10-01 • New York, NY 10017

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