

Late Lactation Mastitis– Dealing With Problem Cows

It is usual at this stage of lactation to find cases of mastitis that appear more stubborn to usual treatments with your normal “first choice” antibiotic. Many struggle to clear even with repeat treatments or “stronger” products. Success of treatment depends on a lot of different factors. Older and high producing cows, chronically infected cows/ chronic high cell count cows are all harder to cure. In spring we see mostly *Strep uberis* infections that usually respond well to most antibiotics, combined with higher milk flow volumes and a more active immune system. Dare I say it but there is also more likely to be preventative measures like teat spraying being properly applied. We still see some farms stopping teat spraying at Christmas or after AB has finished, despite world wide research that has been shown it to be one of the most effective tools for reducing the incidence of mastitis and cell count rises on dairy farms.

At this stage of the season we start to see more contagious cases of mastitis caused by bacteria like *Staph aureus*. These infections are usually harder to treat with many strains being resistant to certain antibiotics. In a lot of *Staph aureus* cases you can realistically only expect to change the infection to sub-clinical, drop the SCC slightly and reduce the swelling and other signs of clinical mastitis when treating at this stage of lactation.

Your best chance to cure these infections is during the dry period. This is why it is important to have good mastitis records so you can choose the right product for the right cows at drying off time. Also assess the cow in terms of age, production, speed of milking, pregnancy status and other health problems. It may be more beneficial to cull her rather than have her treatment fail and she end up with a sub-clinical source of infection for other cows in the herd.

To know what is going on in your herd you'll need to get some milk samples tested. Take a milk sample before you treat the cow and put the sample in the freezer. If the cow does not clear up or if she continues to be a high cell count cow bring the samples straight from the freezer into the clinic for testing prior to your dry cow consult.