

How I Handle and Prevent Dry Cow Mastitis in My Own Herd

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For the last seven years the major part of my practice has been dairy herd counseling and management. However, my own herd will serve as my example today. We have a 200-acre farm with about 150 acres of cropland. Each year about 150 acres of corn are grown for silage, and about 50 acres of wheat are planted each fall.

In December of 1970, our operation was started with a group of Holstein heifers. At the present, 110 cows are on the line with another 30 dry. The barn is equipped with a double-six herringbone and weigh jars. The cows are kept in three groups in total confinement during their lactation. They are grouped according to production. Since additional grain is fed on the silage, regrouping is done at least monthly.

I routinely examine the herd with the California Mastitis Test and culture any positive quarters. No streptococcus problems have been found in our herd. However, some coliform problems, which proved to be klebsiella, were found this summer.

Prior to drying off, the udder is examined, a CMT run, and a Hotis sample collected. I feel that the Hotis Test is one of the easiest mastitis tests a practitioner can use because the results can be obtained in 12-24 hours for streptococci and some staphylococci.

In preparing the Hotis vial, one half ml of Brom-cresol Purple is put in each 10 ml screw cap vial and autoclaved. At the time of examination the milk is put directly into the sterile vials. Cultures can be

done from the Hotis sample either prior or after incubation.

Usually the cows are milked out on the second day after turning dry. Any cow showing a positive quarter is then treated. I treat only the cows that have had mastitis during their lactation or show trouble at the time of examination prior to drying off. In my opinion, there is no advantage to dry cow treating a cow that is negative to culture and does not show an elevated leucocyte count. My opinion is based in part on a field trial that I conducted for one of the major drug companies. If one quarter showed trouble, all four were treated. Frequently a quarter that had been negative at drying off and treated at that time would show trouble at calving. Obviously, the medicine used in the clear quarter did not prevent trouble at calving. Since preparations are quite expensive, money spent on negative cows is wasted. At the present time a benzathine cloxacillin preparation is used for treatment. After turning dry, all grain is stopped, and the cows are allowed limited roughage for the first three or four days to suppress milk production.

The cows are examined physically one or two times during the dry period and a few days prior to calving.

Questions (True or False)

1. The Hotis test is helpful in diagnosing streptococcus and staphylococcus infections.
2. One advantage of the Hotis test is that it gives you the results in a very short time.