Review Your Mastitis Management Program and Goals for Next Year

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Dairy producers should conduct a yearly review of the mastitis management program and milk quality goals they have for their herd. They should evaluate and determine what changes to make for the year ahead to improve the quality of milk produced and udder health of their cows. People who should be involved in the review process are employees who work with the cows, the herd’s veterinarian, milk handler field representative, milking equipment dealer, extension specialist or agent, and other appropriate qualified consultants. Using a team to review the current program and goals will usually result in a more thorough review.

The review team should assess the current management level, milking practices, cow handling procedures, mastitis prevention practices, facilities, mastitis incidence rate, types of organisms causing mastitis, et cetera, as mastitis management practices and goals for the herd are reviewed, modified, or established. Goals that are established or modified should be realistic ones that can be attained in the year ahead. Members of the review team should be consulted as needed throughout the year when practices being used don’t seem to be working, when the mastitis incidence rate increases, or when the quality of milk produced declines. Use the expertise of your team members to help solve mastitis management problems that will occur.

A list of suggested mastitis management program goals is listed below. They are challenging goals that may take many months or longer to realize, but they are attainable.

- Not over 0.5% of the herd has milk discarded daily due to clinical mastitis
- Less than 12% of the cows and 5% of the quarters infected at any time
- Not over 3% of the herd culled yearly due to mastitis
- Less than 2% of the herd have new clinical cases per month
- Bulk tank milk somatic cell count (SCC) consistently less than 200,000/ml
- Bulk tank milk standard plate count (SPC) consistently less than 10,000/ml
- Never any antibiotic contamination of the bulk tank milk
- More than 85% of the herd consistently in the DHIA linear score of 4 or less
- Consistently receive available quality milk premium payments

Don’t let another year go by without taking the time and involving all the appropriate people and consultants in evaluating your management level, the practices you are following, and your herd’s performance. Besides conducting evaluations of your mastitis management program and its goals, also conduct reviews of all the other components of your dairy business, including your dairy’s financial performance, nutrition programs, herd health practices and performance, reproductive program and performance, milk production level, and personnel management. Only by taking time to yearly assess your current dairy business, preferably with the assistance of your competent consultants, and then to make the changes needed to improve your business, will you remain a viable, profitable dairy producer.