

A Practical Look at Controlling Contagious Mastitis

- 1. Prepare teats properly prior to milking.** Udders should be dry, and teats should be cleaned and dried prior to machine attachment using single-service paper towels or individual cloth towels that have been laundered and dried after each milking. Nitrile milking gloves help prevent the spread of bacteria.
- 2. Use adequately sized and properly functioning milking equipment.** Use milking machines in a proper manner on properly prepared cows. Avoid unnecessary air admission into the teat cups during unit attachment, machine stripping and unit take-off that can cause irregular vacuum fluctuations.
- 3. Disinfect teats.** Use an effective product after every milking. Post-milking teat disinfection is the single most effective practice to reduce the rate of new infection by contagious pathogens.
- 4. Assess clinical cases for treatment decisions.** Most cases of clinical mastitis, other than those caused by *Strep ag.*, are only minimally affected by antibiotic therapy during lactation. Work together with the herd veterinarian to design a treatment protocol for mild, moderate and severe cases of clinical mastitis.
- 5. Use dry cow therapy.** Treat each quarter of every cow at dry-off with a single dose of a commercially formulated, FDA-approved dry cow treatment product.
- 6. Consider culling chronically infected cows.** Cows infected with *Staph aureus* or *Mycoplasma sp.* are difficult to treat and present a risk to non-infected cows in the herd.
- 7. Implement a biosecurity plan.** If new animals are purchased, culture milk from them before adding them to the herd.

8. Establish an active milk quality program. A key to controlling contagious mastitis is identifying carriers so they can be separated from uninfected herdmates. AgSource offers individual cow cultures to accomplish this goal. Monitoring progress also is essential. AgSource's monthly milk testing and Udder Health Management Package allows you to measure individual cow and herd subgroup trends. These tools provide faster and more accurate feedback on your herd's progress than monitoring your bulk tank somatic cell count. It also is important to continue with regular and frequent bulk tank cultures, available from AgSource, to monitor progress against targeted mastitis bacteria. Achievable goals for controlling contagious mastitis include: 0 percent of cows infected with *Strep ag* and *Mycoplasma sp.* and less than 5 percent of cows infected with *Staph aureus*.