

to the DHI Hot Sheet ultimately resulted in savings of nearly \$12,000 through reduced culling of heifers, as well as an increase in premiums of over \$15,000 per year.

As a result of the extra efforts aimed at herd health, Heckaman doesn't only gain milk check premiums due to a lower SCC, he saves money on vet costs and feels that is where the bottom line is truly affected. "It's not just about the premium earned with a lower SCC," declares Heckaman. "More importantly is the fact that if your herd is healthy you will save money on management and then the premium comes in as a reward. It is a great thing all the way around."



Kevin Marcks

Dedication and DHI

Kevin Marcks of Seymour, Wisconsin couldn't agree more with Heckaman and maintains his SCC of just over 100,000 by being proactive in the management of his 55-cow herd. Marcks feels familiarity with each cow is the most important tool he has to maintain consistent herd health. Combined with proper milking procedures, knowing the herd enables Marcks to recognize problems early on and for this reason refuses to let anyone else milk his cows.

"You just can't be too careful with milking procedures," states Marcks. "I know my cows and I know immediately when there might be a problem. As soon as I see any flaky skin or a hard quarter I can start treatment and prevent a full-blown case of mastitis."

Milked in a tie-stall barn, keeping cows clean at Wolf River Dairy is very important and starts with keeping udders clipped. At milking time, shavings and debris are brushed off before pre-dipping with EfferCept®. The use of disposable

paper towels also aid in the prevention of spreading disease. Following milking a one percent iodine barrier post-dip is used to keep any bacteria from entering the teat canal.

In addition to personally milking every cow twice a day, Marcks also depends on his DHI records to help him catch any problems he may have missed. "I depend on my Hot Sheet to point out any possible mastitis I didn't catch," mentions Marcks. "I can also use it to gauge a cow and see if she is really making progress or if treatment needs to continue based on her individual SCC."

Much like Argos Holsteins, Marks has also struggled with fresh cow mastitis in the past and has implemented a dry cow program which includes T-HEXX® Dry™. "You have to keep her teats closed to keep bacteria out and T-HEXX has worked great in my dry cow program," states Marcks. "Overall I just try to keep them as healthy as possible and the higher quality milk my herd produces is a result of those efforts. If I am saving on vet costs it means the herd is healthier and the premiums come as a result of that."

While each farm displays a unique management tool for controlling their herd's SCC they all have common ground, including implementing strict cleanliness procedures, a commitment to herd health and relying on their DHI records for SCC information. Perhaps the most common factor is that by taking steps to ensure improved herd health, all three dairies have lowered their SCC, saved on vet expenses and earned higher milk quality premiums. ☆

Controlling mastitis may improve reproductive performance

Not only is mastitis the most costly disease for dairy producers in the United States, it is also



one of the three major reasons why cows are removed from the herd, followed by low production and poor reproduction.

In addition to cow and profitability loss, mastitis has also been proven to effect reproduction. The first report of a possible link between mastitis and reproduction was in 1991 and since then other reports have shown similar relationships.

In the University of Tennessee Dairy study*, milk samples were taken over an 11 year period from 758 cows. Samples were coded as clinical, sub clinical or uninfected based on bacteria analysis and presence of mastitis. Reproductive data were also collected and correlated with the time mastitis occurred. The results:

- Mastitis before first service delayed days to first service, increased days open and services per conception.
- Mastitis after first service increased days open and doubled the services per conception.
- Mastitis after pregnancy had no effect on reproduction.
- Sub-clinical or clinical mastitis both had the same harmful effect on reproduction.
- Different types of bacteria causing mastitis (gram positive or negative) had similar effects on decreasing reproductive performance.

When troubleshooting reproductive problems, if obvious answers can't be found it may be time to look at other less obvious reasons. Controlling mastitis may be one more way to improve the reproductive performance on your dairy.

*study available on-line at: www.nmconline.org/articles/reprod.htm ☆