

# Texas Dairy Matters

*Higher Education Supporting the Industry*

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## DRY COW TREATMENT STILL PAYS

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Treating all cows at dry off with a long-acting intramammary antibiotic has been recommended as part of the five-point mastitis control program for over 30 years. This regimen began because more than half of all cows were infected at dry off and bulk tank somatic cell counts were high. As a result of adoption of the five-point mastitis control program the number of infected cows at dry off has decreased and average bulk tank somatic cell counts declined.

Concern about antibiotic-resistant bacteria developing due to antibiotic use has some dairy farmers examining these techniques. Maintaining dairy profitability during periods with reduced milk prices also stimulates producers to look for ways to shave dollars off expenses.

### FIVE POINT MASTITIS CONTROL PROGRAM

1. Milk clean, dry udders.
2. Use properly functioning milking equipment.
3. Post-dip every teat of every cow at the conclusion of milking.
4. Treat promptly any cow with a clinical case of mastitis and use a dry cow antibiotic preparation on all cows.
5. Cull chronically-infected cows.

Consequently, the question is asked, "Should we change our mastitis control methods for dry cow treatment?"

A recent study conducted in the United Kingdom compared dry cow treatment to no treatment of uninfected cows. Cows in the treated group received one dry cow preparation immediately after the last milking. Somatic cell counts and bacteriology for all quarters of all cows were evaluated seven days prior to dry off, at dry off, at calving and seven to 14 days after calving.

Bacteriological results from the study showed that the major infectious organism has changed from *Staphylococcus aureus* 30 years ago to *Streptococcus uberis* today. However, dry cow treatment seems just as important today in controlling mastitis.

No new cases of clinical infection occurred during the dry period in 117 treated cows. Twelve of the 134 untreated cows developed clinical mastitis in the dry period. At calving, 42 untreated cows had a new infection compared to only 12 treated cows. Within 21 days of calving, clinical mastitis occurred in 21 cows in the untreated group and nine cows in the treated group.

A 100 percent decrease in infections during the dry period and a 69 percent reduction in infections at calving, proved dry cow therapy an excellent preventive and a cost-effective component of a mastitis prevention program. Search for other ways to reduce costs in your herd. Don't stop dry cow therapy. As the old saying goes, it would be "Penny wise and pound foolish."