

Mastitis control in wet conditions

Mastitis risk has changed significantly in the past ten years, for example, the use of feed pads, stand-off areas and bare paddocks have all increased the exposure of teats to bacteria. When conditions get wet, the risk of mastitis skyrockets. Some old routines aren't sufficient to get on top of mastitis when it gets wet. This sheet summarises the key tips for getting mastitis back under control when it's wet.

If elevated BMCCs or clinical cases persist

Assess whether you have an underlying problem with teat condition, machine function, or other opportunities for bacteria to spread. Seek professional advice.

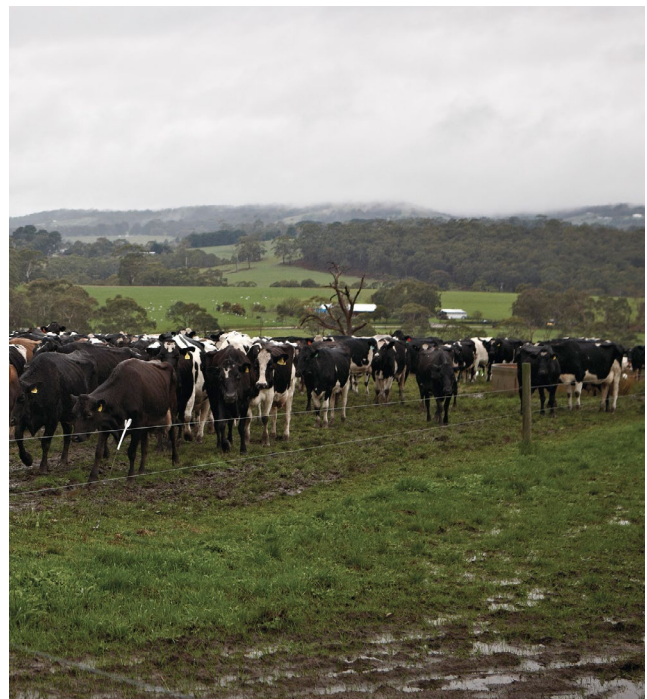
Cultures are needed to determine how mastitis is spreading within a herd.

At the end of lactation

Dry cow treatment is your best chance to remove subclinical infections and reduce mastitis risk at calving. Talk to your vet about using blanket antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment and teat sealant.

IN WET OR MUDDY PERIODS THERE ARE FOUR KEY STEPS

1. **Wash and dry** all teats before cups go on. On wet or muddy days, every teat must be washed and dried with one paper towel per cow.
2. **Strip cows every day** to detect, treat and isolate clinical cases.
3. **Cover all surfaces of all four teats with teat disinfectant.**
4. **Keep teats clean for an hour** after the cows leave the shed. Set up feeding and other routines so cows don't lie down soon after milking.



On wet or muddy days you may be required to change your milking routine. You may need an extra person in the shed.

1. Wash and dry teats before cups go on.

Wash – If there is mud/manure on the teat surfaces, mastitis-causing bacteria are more likely to enter the teat during milking.

Dry – If teats are wet, cups crawl up, cut off milk drainage and damage the teat ends.

Wash with a low pressure water hose and dry with new paper towel for each cow.

In rotaries, you may need to **change your cups on position**.

2. Strip cows every day to detect, treat and isolate clinical cases.

The earlier that clinical cases are treated and isolated, the higher the chance of cure, and the lower the chance of mastitis spreading.

Make daily quarter stripping a routine at times of high risk. You can reduce the time taken by stripping only two teats per cow per milking, e.g. all front teats at the morning milking and all back teats at the evening milking.

Always wear gloves and avoid getting milk on your hands.

A quarter has **clinical mastitis if it has abnormal milk (wateriness or clots) for three or more squirts of milk.**

Recheck suspect cows at the next milking. Have a system in place that lets other staff know about suspect cows.

3. Cover all surfaces of all four teats with teat disinfectant.

100% coverage with the correct concentration of **disinfectant** and **emollient** helps remove bacteria and heal teat damage. This is critical to mastitis control. Supple teat skin is also easier to keep clean.

It is recommended to use a ready-to-use product wherever possible.

If you do mix teat disinfectant from concentrate, re-check the mixing rate and consider adding extra emollient during the wet period.

Spray the whole surface of every teat. Check with a paper towel on some teats to make sure the fronts of the teats haven't been missed.

See *image below*.

If you usually use an automatic teat spray at the dairy exit, switch to **hand spraying** for this period to ensure complete coverage.



4. Keep teats clean for an hour after cows leave the shed.

Teat ends remain open for up to an hour after milking. If teats become dirty during this time, there is a high risk of bacteria entering the udder.

Reduce muddy areas at the exit of the shed, lanes, holding and feeding areas. Look for badly pot-holed areas and repair or use a temporary fence to prevent cows entering. Scrape clean feed pads regularly and always move cows slowly to minimise splashing of mud and manure onto udders.

Set up a routine so **cows don't lie down** soon after milking. Have feed available when cows leave the shed, especially on feed pads, so cows stand and feed for the first hour.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Look at the relevant Countdown Farm Guidelines and Resource Sheets on the **Dairy Australia website**.

Talk to your milk quality adviser, veterinarian or field officer to adapt these steps to your farm situation.