

Control Mastitis

Prevention Is
Best Method

By

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The fields of human and veterinary medicine have in recent years received a group of drugs more effective in combating disease bacteria than anything previously available. Since mastitis is a bacterial disease it is natural to expect good results from the antibiotics and sulfa drugs in its control, and good results have been obtained.

Prevention Best

But by relying on treatment of the infected animal to control mastitis, dairymen have not gained in their struggle against the disease. The need for treatment is a sign of failure. Control of mastitis, in spite of the availability of effective drugs, still must be accomplished by prevention.

Once infected, a cow may respond to treatment a number of times or even clear up completely, but she commonly has to be culled sooner, and frequently has been a source of infection to others in the herd. By a widespread relaxation of preventive measures and uninstructed use of antibiotics, drug resistant strains of bacteria have come to the forefront, while even the susceptible types require expensively greater doses of the drug.

Most dairymen recognize conditions that lead to a high incidence of mastitis. Practically all udder infections arise from udder injury or poor sanitation. An injured teat or quarter will develop mastitis even in the cleanest environment. Where mastitis is common in a herd, injuries are usually frequent and exposure to infective bacteria almost constant.

Crowded, poorly constructed corrals that are in disrepair, scanty shade areas, poor breeding facilities, slippery barn floors, careless milking techniques and unregulated vacuum are a few conditions that should never



This shrunken right rear quarter demonstrates a typical aftermath of mastitis.

exist if injury to udders is to be minimal. Manure, flies, chronically infected cows and poor drainage must not be tolerated.

The dairy that has few or none of the conditions that encourage infection will still have to deal with mastitis occasionally. It is after contributing causes of infection have been eliminated that treatment has a place in mastitis control.

Important to Cull

One of the first things to consider when faced with a case of mastitis is whether the cow is worth keeping at all. Many times the danger of spreading the infection to healthy cows, coupled with the expense of treatment, and the fact that the infection means less production, add up to one thing — cull.

If the decision is to keep the cow, next try to decide just how severe the infection is. Not all mastitis can be treated alike. Assuming the case is a milk one such as you have had experience with, and such as your veterinarian has previously prescribed treatment and medication for, go ahead and treat. On the other hand, if there is anything unusual about the symptoms the cow shows, either in the udder or generally, don't hesitate to call your veterinarian.

Perhaps "garget" hasn't killed many cows, but it has ruined many a quarter, and mastitis can affect the cow severely enough to cause death. So

don't hesitate to consult the veterinarian or accept his services if he thinks a call is necessary.

Accurate instructions on how to use udder medication as well as on what to use should be obtained from one person only, the veterinarian. Do not trust your neighbor's well meaning advice or that of the clerk in town who sells the medicine. Don't forget the old time tried methods of helping the cow to get rid of the infection herself.

Massage, hot and cold applications and frequent stripping of an infected gland saved many quarters before antibiotics — and still aid when effective medication is being used. Of course, you can't strip frequently if it means draining the medication, but don't let an injection of medicine lull you into neglecting other measures that may mean the margin of a producer or a cull upon recovery.

Don't Trust 'Em

If the cow recovers and remains a worthwhile producer, remember one final thing in her regard. Never trust her. She may milk good and still shed enough bacteria to infect a healthy animal next to her. Place her last in the milking string. If there are several like her, try to corral them separately from the clean animals. Always let a history of mastitis be a point well considered in culling.