



## Dairy Cattle – Drying-Off Recommendations

### Preparing the cow for dry-off

- Cows should be dried off when their production is between 5 and 12L/day.
- Take steps for cows producing more than 12 L/day, to reduce production to 12 L or less by the drying-off date. These steps involve reducing food intake and changing routine.
  - o One week prior to the final milking date:
    - Reduce concentrate feeding.
    - Three days prior to the final milking date:
      - Move to a paddock with very little feed. Reduce feed intake to maintenance level eg approx 7–8 kg hay for a cow weighing 500 kg.
    - Separate the cows from the main herd if practical.
    - Change routine for milking if practical eg bring the cows to the milking area through a different entry.
- Dry off abruptly; do not skip days and preferably do not skip milkings.
- Milk out as usual at each milking until drying-off.
- Aim for small batches- person can only handle about 20 cows per hour

### Administering the Dry Cow Therapy

- Ensure that your hands and the teats are clean and dry.
- Put on disposable gloves.
- If you are treating more than one teat, scrub the ones furthest away first. This reduces the risk of unintentionally contaminating an already disinfected teat.
- Disinfect by vigorously scrubbing the teat opening with a cotton ball and alcohol (or teat wipes) for a minimum of 10 seconds.
- Check the cotton ball. If there is any dirty colour, repeat the scrub using a clean cotton ball until there is no more dirt seen.
- If you are treating more than one teat, treat the one nearest you first, followed by treatment of the more distant teats.
- Remove the cap of the tube and, without touching its tip with your hand, gently insert the nozzle into the teat canal. It is not necessary to insert the nozzle to its full depth – this can dilate the teat canal excessively and predispose the cow to mastitis.
- The technique of only partially inserting the nozzle into the teat canal reduces teat end damage and has been shown.
  - o Under no circumstances should intra-mammary tubes become wet (or submerged) or dirty before use. This greatly increases the risk of environmental bacteria being introduced into the udder. If you drop it, bin
- Dip or spray teats with freshly made-up teat disinfectant after treatment.

- Mark the udder (eg with a spray paint) so that cows that have received Dry Cow Treatment can be easily recognised.
- Record cow ID, date, and product details of all Dry Cow Treatments.

#### **Immediate care after Dry Cow Therapy administration**

- Avoid allowing them to lie down on bare ground or areas that are soiled with manure in the two hours immediately after you give Dry Cow Treatment.
- To minimise milk and antibiotic leakage, do not walk cows' long distances for 3–4 days after Dry Cow Treatment is administered.
- Put the cows in a dry, clean paddock (not heavily soiled with manure, no bare ground, no exposure to dairy effluent) for 3–4 days after drying-off.
- Continue the 'maintenance only' diet for another 3–4 days for cows that were producing 12 or more litres/day in the week before drying-off.

#### **The following days after Dry Cow Therapy administration**

- Cows are susceptible to new infections particularly in the first week of the dry period before their teats have sealed.
- Look at udders of all cows for swollen quarters (larger than other quarters on the same cow), while cows are in the paddock.
- Avoid bringing cows near the dairy area (or they may start running milk).
- Observe every day for a week. Look for swollen udders and signs of sickness ie cows that are visibly slow in their movement or off their feed.
- Do not handle – just look.
- If a quarter is swollen, bring the suspect cow into the yards and check the udder manually.
- Check for heat and pain – compare between all quarters.
- Strip secretion from suspect quarter and check. It may be different from milk prior to drying-off (eg thicker and more 'stringy') and therefore difficult to assess.
- If suspicious, treat as a clinical case.
- Do not remove milk or secretion from adjacent normal quarters.
- Treat clinical quarters by stripping out completely and using a full course of lactation antibiotic.
- Treat again with Dry Cow Treatment and amend record of date for Minimum Dry Period when the case is resolved.

**Reference:** Dairy Australia. 2018. Countdown Farm Guidelines for Mastitis Control: Dry off and Dry Period. Southbank, VIC 3006, pp 63-85.