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Mastitis and “failure to cure”

Mastitis cases that do not cure with treatment are very frustrating but common. Not all cases will be cured with treatment. The reported cure rates for the common mastitis pathogens are:

- *Strep uberis* = 82-91% cure rate
- *Staph aureus* = 20-60%
- *Strep dysgalactiae* = 90-98% cure rate
- *Strep agalactiae* = nearly 100% cure rate
- *E. coli* = High rate of spontaneous cure (generally not treated if cow is not sick)

There are numerous reasons for failure to cure. Using the wrong antibiotic is usually the least likely reason but we do occasionally see mastitis bugs which are resistant to some of the common antibiotics.

Older cows, cows in late lactation, cows with multiple infected quarters and cows with chronic long-term high cell counts are all harder to cure.

Other factors that reduce the chance of a cure are if cows are not milked out properly or if teats are contaminated during treatment with tubes and new bugs are introduced. The use of drugs that are out of date or that have not been stored correctly or where label directions are not followed may also lead to reduced cure rates.

As there are many reasons for treatment failure, we should try and maximise the likelihood of cure at first treatment. This can be done by knowing what mastitis pathogen we are dealing with, selecting appropriate cows to treat and using appropriate antibiotic and supportive treatments.