



B.C. DAIRY TALK

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Biosecurity for Udder Health

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If you purchase replacement heifers or cows, or bring “outside” cattle into your herd, please read on. Beware . . . your herd health is at risk! BIOSECURITY describes management practices that will allow you to avoid bringing new diseases into your herd. This article describes steps to reduce the risk of introducing infectious mastitis, such as Staph. aureus, Strep. ag. or Mycoplasma mastitis. If you must bring outside cattle onto your farm, the National Mastitis Council (1997) recommends the following, preferably after consulting with your veterinarian.

1. Know The Farm Of Origin

- Request a bulk tank culture. Do not introduce mastitis pathogens into your herd.
- Request 6 to 12 months of bulk tank SCC data. Beware of upward trends in SCC or even consistent SCC levels above your standards.
- Request 6 to 12 months of bulk tank bacteria counts (SPC). Beware of upward trends or bacteria counts higher than your current standards.
- Request 6 to 12 months of records for clinical mastitis. Beware of levels of clinical mastitis higher than your herd.

2. Know The Cows

If you are purchasing one animal or a few cattle, have some pre-purchase procedures.

- Request SCC and clinical mastitis history for each cow to be purchased. Cows with a high SCC or history of chronic episodes of clinical mastitis should be rejected.
- Request the results of quarter milk samples from each cow. Reject cows with evidence of bacterial infections.
- Examine all cows to be purchased, including udder, milk quality and teat ends. Reject cows that don't meet your standards for mammary conformation.

3. Protect Your Herd

Even if you have pre-screened animals, treat all purchased animals as potential health risks into your herd. On-farm biosecurity is a combination of management techniques and facility management.

- Newly-purchased animals, including milking cows, should be housed in separate or isolated facilities from the herd. This helps overall herd health and biosecurity. The length of time to maintain this separation depends on your goals, but discuss this with your vet.
- Collect and culture quarter milk samples to check for infection. If cows are infected, consult with your vet.
- Assume that any cow you purchase has been recently treated with antibiotics. This is a milk quality issue and risk to your milk



market. Evaluate milk from all purchased cows for the presence of antibiotics before you include that milk in the bulk tank.

- Milk all purchased cows last or with separate milking equipment. This should be standard procedure until you and your vet give these new cows a clean bill of health.

Developing and following good biosecurity plans takes time and planning. Developing biosecurity

plans decreases your risk of introducing health problems to your herd. There is no guarantee that it will completely prevent disease introduction. Monitoring bulk tank SCC and bacteria, individual cow SCC and clinical mastitis rates, are on-going tasks and essential for maintaining high levels of herd health and milk quality.

Your investment in your cows and farm is considerable. Insure it with good biosecurity.

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