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Reviewing mastitis treatment protocols - more than just “which tube?”

To get the best out of mastitis treatments, it's important for farms to regularly review protocols with your vets. Here we look at how to get the best out of a mastitis treatment review. Prevention should always be the main focus, but there will always be cases that require treatment. Firstly, it's important to establish exactly what is going on. A few difficult-to-treat cases may give the impression that the current protocol isn't working, but that might not accurately reflect what's really going on, so it's vital to take a look at the data. This is where clinical case records are valuable. Ideally these records will be on a farm software system or collected by the milk recorder, but even if they're just in the farm diary they can be transferred to a spreadsheet for useful analysis. Analysis of basic information (date of mastitis case, cow ID and calving date) can reveal the incidence of new infections, the recurrence rate and whether new infections are predominantly occurring in the dry period or lactation period. You and your vet can then start making some informed decisions. If the data suggests that cure rates could be improved, the checklist review can help drill down into where gains might be made.

Mastitis detection

Effective mastitis treatment begins with prompt and early detection. Herds that are not fore stripping are likely to miss mild cases of mastitis, where clots are present without heat or swelling in the udder. This may not be too much of a problem in herds with good cure rates and low mastitis incidence, but if cure rates are low, time in the parlour spent fore stripping cows to detect mastitis early will be a sound investment. This will enable you to start treating cases earlier in the course of disease, helping to improve cure rates.

Insertion technique

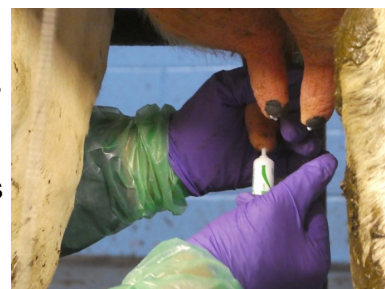
The next area to check is tube insertion. Much is, rightly, made of good hygiene practices when administering dry-cow therapy – hygiene is just as important when treating mastitis in milking cows. **A full teat disinfection protocol using surgical spirit and cotton wool, just as when administering dry-cow therapy**, reduces the risk of introducing new pathogens to the udder when inserting milking cow tubes and therefore **reducing** the chance of a cure!

For tubes where there's an option of partial or full removal of the cap to reveal a short or long nozzle, the shorter less invasive nozzle on the tube should be used to reduce the chance of damaging the keratin lining of the teat.

Frequency of treatment

How often the treatment should be administered will depend on the tube. Some require twice a day treatment and others just once a day. Using a tube that's licenced for once-a-day treatment means the cow is tubed fewer times for a given treatment duration. This should reduce the chance of introducing infection or damaging the keratin lining of the teat. After infusion, products disperse into the udder tissue, so products licensed for once-a-day use remain at effective levels for 24 hours, even after milking.

P.T.O.



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Anti-inflammatory treatment

It's now widely accepted that an important part of an effective mastitis treatment protocol is administering an anti-inflammatory treatment. Mastitis is a painful condition – even mild cases are painful. This is a good enough reason alone to provide pain relief, but there's also evidence to show, that using NSAIDs alongside antibiotic treatment can improve cure rates, improve fertility and reduce culling.

Which tube?

The review will help the farm vet decide the most appropriate tube to prescribe depending on the mastitis pattern on the farm. The vet may prescribe a narrow or broad-spectrum treatment, and will consider the licenced duration of treatment amongst other factors, to ensure cases of mastitis are treated with the most appropriate product for the optimal number of days.

Once the treatment protocol has been revised and agreed by you and your vet, a simple written protocol should be displayed in the parlour for the whole team to be aware of. If you have any questions, or want to review your protocol, please speak to your vet.

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Mark McFarland from Lallemand brought his colleague Bruno to give Parklands' clients a talk on finishing beef cattle, and Wayne Acheson of Foyle meats, kindly agreed to host the meeting at his farm. The talk and discussions were very good, and the main points are summarised below:

- One clean water bowl/trough per 10 cattle, ideally 2 bowls per pen each with a minimum flow rate of 0.7 litres per minute.
- 5m squared floor area per heavy bullock is recommended.
- Free access to salt licks increases water intake and salivation keeping stomach healthy.
- Roughage like staw should be chopped to max 1 inch and preferably closer to 1 cm to encourage chewing the cud!
- **Minimum of 30cm** of feed space per animal, the more space they have (ideally 90cm each) means better intakes and less stress !
- Lower group size is better for stress, 20 cattle or more will tend to reduce intakes, 10 cattle is better.
- Good quality diet with minimum heating is important to maximise intakes and minimise rumen acidosis

Signs of acidosis are:

- Loose faeces and straining as the anus is irritated.
- Laminitis characterised by lameness/stiffness, reddened feet and high incidence of fouls.
- Increased vocalisation/roaring.
- Reduced feed intakes
- Mild to severe bloating.

If you have any queries about these topics please contact a Parklands vet.

