



Douglas Green Consulting Ltd

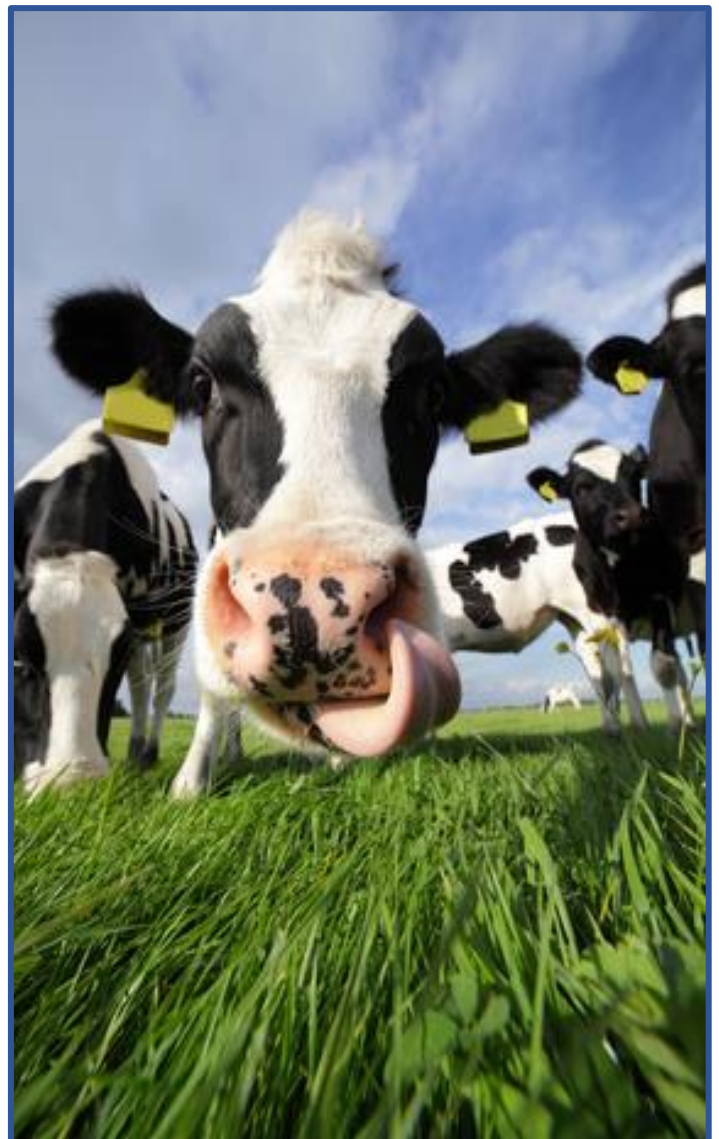
WINTER NEWSLETTER

Included in this issue:

- Selective dry cow therapy – what have we learnt and is it right for your business?

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Douglas Green Consulting Ltd newsletter.

New figures released by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate show that UK livestock farmers have slashed their antibiotic use by 53% in the last four years. This is a good news story for the livestock industry, but as with all businesses we must strive to continue to improve. There are many ways to reduce our reliance on antibiotics further and selective dry cow therapy has proved popular. Are you using this on your farm?



Selective Dry Cow Therapy – What You Need To Know



DGCL have been promoting selective dry cow therapy on farms now for many years – in fact our first newsletter on selective dry cow therapy was written over 4 years ago!

We have all heard the story of ‘that cow’ that is dried off without antibiotics only to become very sick a week later or else calves back in with a SCC off the scale. However, these are individual cases and it seems easier to remember these few ‘problem cows’ than all the ones that were successfully dried off without antibiotics.

Experience of selective dry cow therapy over the past 4 years has shown us that to successfully dry off cows without antibiotics, strict protocols, care and good management are crucial. In this newsletter we review the key considerations for selective dry cow therapy.

Get your dry cow management right first!

Good dry cow management is essential to reduce the risk of infection during the dry period, especially in the early and late dry period.

A cow is **5-10 times** more susceptible to infection just after drying off and close to calving so environmental management at these times needs to be particularly good.



The following are key indicators of how effective your dry period is:

- ✓ **< 10%** heifers should calve in with a SCC < 200,000
- ✓ Of cows that are dried off with a SCC > 200,000, more than **85%** should calve in with a SCC < 200,000
- ✓ Of cows that are dried off with a SCC < 200,000, **less than 10%** should calve in with a SCC > 200,000
- ✓ Less than **1 in 12** cows should get clinical mastitis in the first **30 days in milk**

If you are not meeting some of these targets, then you need to proceed very cautiously when drying cows off without antibiotic dry cow therapy.

You must be confident that your dry cow management and facilities offer the best environment possible during this vulnerable time in the pregnancy cycle. There is no point in drying a cow off without antibiotics and then sticking her in a dirty environment resulting in infection and mastitis problems.

Mastitis – what's in your herd?

It is important that you know what type of mastitis your clinical cases are. If you have a high prevalence of *Strep agalactiae* mastitis, then drying cows off without antibiotics is probably not for you.

Working closely with your vet to determine mastitis breakdowns (using samples) will help to identify the likely risks before proceeding with selective dry cow therapy.





How do I select the cows to target for no antibiotic therapy at drying off?

You need to look through your **SCC records** and your **clinical mastitis records** in order to decide which cows to select. There are some schools of thought that suggest that if a cow's last three SCC are **< 200,000** and she has had **no case of mastitis** in the current lactation then antibiotics are not necessary.

However, some subclinical infections can cause SCC spikes so we would suggest looking at every SCC result during the current lactation to select these animals.

Remember!

A SCC of 200 could mean that 3 quarters have a SCC of ~ 50 and the other is infected and has a SCC of 650.

Our recommended criteria include:

- ✓ No clinical mastitis in current lactation
- ✓ No SCC **> 150** during the current lactation (with the exception of the first one)
- ✓ Cows are giving 25 litres or less at drying off (if cows are over 25 litres it is probably safer to use antibiotics and then put them on the dry cow diet straight after to shut down milk production)
- ✓ Cows which to date, have had no other major health issues (bad feet, poor condition etc.) – they will be stronger to fight off possible infection



What should I consider prior to drying off?

If you are **not** going to give a cow antibiotics at drying off it is crucial that you:

- ✓ Use a teat sealant and ensure you insert it correctly. Grip to close off the top of the teat canal as you insert the tube to ensure the sealant stays in the teat canal. **DO NOT MASSAGE IT UP INTO THE UDDER!**
- ✓ Trim feet and tails a few days prior to drying off to minimise bacterial challenges at drying off
- ✓ If cows are giving over 25 litres of milk either drop milk prior to drying off by shutting cows in on the dry cow diet for a couple of days (**IN A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**) or use antibiotics
- ✓ Dry off cows as a group at the end of milking – do not try to do it during milking as you are unlikely to be as methodical and hygienic when you have a collecting yard full of cows to milk
- ✓ Adopt a very strict hygienic drying off procedure to reduce the risk of inserting bacteria into the teat at this time

Drying Off Protocol: The steps to success without antibiotics!



The procedure for drying off should be as follows:

1. Wear gloves
2. Clean off any udder/teat contamination and pre-dip teats in appropriate disinfectant (ensure adequate contact time)
3. Dry teats starting with teats furthest away from you
4. Scrub teats with surgical spirit on cotton wool (ensure good coverage on teat end and again start with teats furthest from you)
5. Foremilk again to clean out teat canal (do closest teats first)
6. Wipe again with fresh surgical spirit on cotton wool (starting with teats furthest away). Make sure cotton wool is clean at end of cleaning
7. Insert teat sealant starting with closest teats first
8. Post dip
9. Let cows out onto clean yard to stand for half hour



Knowledge is Power!

It is essential that all staff who are likely to dry off cows without antibiotics are properly **trained** in the correct procedure

Is selective dry cow therapy worth it?

There are significant cost savings to be made by not using blanket antibiotic therapy on all cows.

In addition to this there are likely to be further benefits from the protective nature of the good bugs in the udder, thus helping to reduce mastitis in the subsequent lactation.

However, tread with caution.....

If you pick the **wrong cows**, and/or do not carry out the **correct drying off procedure** or get your **dry cow environment management wrong** this could result in an **EXPLOSION OF MASTITIS**, so proceed with care!

Could selective dry cow therapy be right for your herd?

If you need help interpreting your mastitis and SCC data to identify cows for selective dry cow therapy or wish to discuss your own herd situation, one of our team would be happy to help!

Please contact Janice for more information and the opportunity to discuss whether this could be the right choice for your business.

Call our office on 01666 817278

Or email

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