

Teat scoring – A Great Starting Point to Manage Mastitis

Maintaining a Bulk Milk Somatic Cell Count (BMSCC) under 150,000 cells/ml is a sign of a healthy productive herd. The aim of mastitis control is to limit the number of bacteria on the cow's teats and to reduce the risk of bacteria entering the udder through the teat canal. Although this sounds simple, mastitis is the end result of complex interactions between the cow, bacteria, environment, milking machine and the farmer.

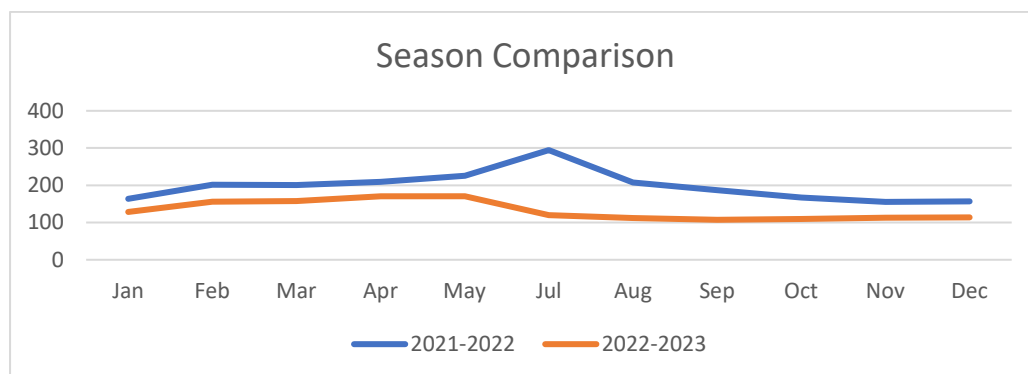
The big question is – where do I start? and the answer is right in front of us – check the cows teats!

If we can ensure all cows in the herd have great teat skin condition through good teat spraying and minimal damage to the teat-ends then we are a long way to produce more milk of higher quality.

Here's a great example of the value of teat scoring in a corporate farming group. Teat scoring in early lactation allowed the vets to make timely recommendations that the farm team could action straight away. Depending on the farm, the recommended actions included alterations to teat spray coverage, increasing levels of emollient in the teat spray mix or reducing over-milking by getting cups off earlier.

Farm	Teat skin condition		Teat spray coverage		Teat Ends	
	Supple	Dry	Full coverage	Part coverage	Normal	Rough
1	12	88	0	100	98	2
2	100	0	100	0	84	16
3	92	8	100	0	92	8
4	94	6	75	25	98	2
5	82	18	75	25	100	0

Once the actions were implemented, and following a good drying off programme, the year-on-year results speak for themselves. The average BMSCC across the 5 farms dropped from 200,000 in the 2021/22 season to 130,000 in the 2022/23 season.



Based on 5520 cows averaging 400kgms/yr and a \$7 payout, the cost of mastitis calculator shows this is worth a whopping \$174,000 in increased production* **plus** the added benefit of less mastitis treatments, less antibiotics used and less time dealing with mastitis cases. That's an amazing payback benefiting everyone - especially the cows

- <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/cow-health/mastitis/tools-and-resources/smartsamm-gap-calculator>