

Teat Dip...What's the point?

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Did you know the first comprehensive plans to control mastitis were developed in the 1960s in the United Kingdom? This mastitis control plan has proven to be successful since its implementation more than 50 years ago and has continued today. The concept driving current mastitis control plans still remains similar to the initial concept 50 years ago: the infection rate of mastitis is directly related to the number of bacteria present on the teat when the milking unit is attached to the cow. To control mastitis, we need to control bacterial numbers. One way we accomplish this is post-dipping teats.

So what exactly is the role of teat dip in the mastitis control plan?

1. Flush off the milk film left on the teats which is a result of vacuum exposure during milking. If we leave the milk film on the teat, bacteria have an opportunity to feed and grow in this milk film.
2. Teat dip leaves a germicide on the skin to kill any bacteria present.
3. Teat dip or disinfection does NOT affect existing mastitis infections.

Are you successfully using teat dips?

1. Cover the entire teat with teat dip.
 - a. The common recommendation to cover the teat end and bottom one-third of the teat barrel is inadequate.
2. Monitor teat dip coverage on a regular basis.
 - a. It is critical to cover the entire area of the teat that had contact with the milking unit for bacterial control. Teat dip coverage should be monitored on a regular basis by observation of procedures within the parlor and observation of cows outside the parlor in the exit lanes.
3. Proper containers are needed to successfully dip teats.
 - a. The best dippers have a reservoir below the dip cup to carry the dip. The reservoir is squeezed and dip comes up to the top of the dipping cup. Dip does not fall back down into the lower reservoir to contaminate the teat dip with any organic material present on the teats. Another note; teat coverage with sprayers is often not adequate and uses more teat dip.
4. The typical use rates for various application methods are as follows:
 - a. Spraying 20 mL per cow; slosh cup 15 ml; non-return dipper 6 - 8 mL; foaming 4 - 6 mL; and a Thrifty Dipper 4 mL.
5. Another important routine observation is how teat dip is moved from storage containers to the parlor. Old open containers are contaminated easily. Some dealers install gravity feed systems to bring dip into the parlor to make refilling dip cups faster and with less potential for contamination.