

## **Summer and bulk tank SCC: Stay ahead of the game!**

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This time of year many producers are concerned about increases in bulk tank SCC and clinical mastitis cases. This is a consistent seasonal trend that is seen in the summer. Increased temperature and humidity allow bacteria in the environment to multiply faster. This means that teat ends are exposed to higher numbers of environmental bacteria, which can result in more environmental mastitis infections. However, you do not need to accept defeat! Stepping up your environmental mastitis prevention practices can minimize this seasonal trend.

Bedding management is of most importance, because of the amount of time that teat ends are in contact with bedding. It will be necessary to remove soiled bedding and add fresh bedding more frequently to maintain bacteria counts below acceptable levels. Once a week bedding of stalls may not be adequate. A bedding culture could be performed to make certain that bedding management is adequate to maintain bacteria counts below 1 million colony-forming units per milliliter. If using sand-bedded freestalls, this is a good time to remove and replace all sand from the back third of the stalls. Ensuring sufficient air speeds to minimize heat stress also acts to dry bedding surfaces, which will limit the moisture required for bacterial growth. As recommended year-round, have fresh feed available when cows return from milking, so they remain standing to eat while their teat sphincters are in the process of closing. Alleyways should be scraped clean during each milking while the cows are in the parlor.

Equally important is careful udder preparation prior to milking. Be alert while pre-stripping to identify clinical mastitis cases and exclude this high SCC milk from the bulk tank. Since teat surfaces will have more bacteria present than during other times of year, be meticulous about pre-dip coverage, pre-dip contact time, and toweling to clean and dry the teats.

For recommendations specific to your farm, speak with your veterinarian.