

Treated cows: Keep that stuff out of the tank!

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In 2019, antibiotic residues in milk reached their lowest level in the last 24 years. The National Milk Drug Residue Database (NMDRD) reported that just 0.009% of tankers tested positive in 2019. This is a great improvement when compared to the 0.104% positive in 1996.

This represents 327 positive Grade A tankers out of approximately 3.6 million. The NMDRD also found that residues in Grade A producer milk, sampled directly from the farm bulk tanks, was higher at 0.067%.

Grade B tankers and bulk tanks also had slightly higher rates of positive tests at 0.012% for tankers and 0.095% for bulk tanks.

Of the 4,128,838 tests ran, residues detected include beta lactams, sulfonamides, and tetracyclines. Beta lactams include penicillin derivatives and cephalosporins. Sulfonamides include several types of sulfa antibiotics.

Great work to the dairy industry for improving these residue numbers! How can your farm continue to achieve residue-free milk? Find some tips below.

- Have treatment protocols in place that have the withdrawals listed next to the treatment. Review these with your veterinarian and employees who use the products.
- Mark bottles of medications that require withdrawals with something such as red duct tape.
- Have key persons in charge of treating cows. Even better, teach them to identify the treated cow **before** they give the treatment.
- Use written treatment records and a whiteboard in the parlor with treated cow IDs.
- Make sure everyone who milks understands that cows who received certain medications may need to have their milk diverted from the tank.
- Mark all treated cows with 2 forms of “treated” identification. For example, 2 red leg bands, paint on legs plus 2 leg bands, or place in the hospital pen with 2 leg bands. Red duct tape can work very well in place of leg bands.
- Use a milk residue test such as the Delvo to check cows before placing them back into the bulk tank.