MONDOVI
VETERINARY SERVICE

Mastitis Treatment: Selecting the Tube That is Right For Your Herd.

Mastitis is an issue we all face on a weekly if not daily basis. Most farms have a treatment protocol in place that has been the same for years. Do you know why you are using the mastitis tube you use? Have you considered that it might be possible to use different tubes on a case by case basis?

General Mastitis Tube Selection:
As we all know, each farm has its own unique set of challenges and hurdles. Knowing this, it isn't surprising that every farm as their own unique "bacteria profile" contributing to their mastitis cases. Bulk tank culture and bulk tank PCR are both effective means to understand what organisms are present on your farm. It is important to note that the traditional bulk tank culture method will give you the best idea of what organisms are affecting your cows right ***now.*** In comparison, the PCR method will identify DNA of both live and dead bacteria, giving you an idea of everything on your farm right now, but will not tell you which of those bacteria are causing mastitis in your cows. After determining what organisms are present on your farm your veterinarian can help you select the best treatment option for the majority of your cows.

Individual Mastitis Tube Selection:
As we all know each case of mastitis is NOT created equal. It is important to have a general treatment protocol in place for your farm, however, it is even more important to understand what is causing mastitis in individual cows. Consumer pressure continues to trend towards more restrictive antibiotic use, putting the pressure on veterinarians and farmers to work together in making smart treatment decisions. The easiest way to address consumer pressure without culling every affected cow is to culture prior to treatment. Individual culture is something that we have already discussed. Culture allows for individual animal/quarter sample testing and organism identification.We recommend culture with a 24 hour turnaround time (after receipt at the clinic) so that smart treatment decisions can be implemented early in the course of infection. After identifying the organism, treatment is initiated if necessary. While it may seem risky to wait 24 hours to treat, there is little to no risk for animals with mild-abnormal milk without changes to the quarter. In animals with more severe mastitis (moderate-abnormal milk and changes to the quarter) the animal should be monitored closely for any changes (severe drop in milk, off feed, etc) and treatment instituted as needed with the understanding that treatment may be changed following culture results.

Yes, culturing individual cows and altering their treatment is more work, and will almost always result in having more than one type of mastitis tube on farm. However, it is not all in vain! Cornell University research, has demonstrated that treatment decisions made following individual animal culture can provide annual savings up to $30,000 per 1,000 cows. In the current price climate it's tough to say no to savings like that.