

The basics of containing and removing Staph aureus mastitis in a large dairy herd

1. Among the highly contagious types of mastitis, Staph aureus is particularly hard to bring under control because of the high percentage of subclinical infections, in which infected cows remain invisible with milk that looks normal, sometimes as long as a year.
2. Meanwhile, these cows can spread Staph aureus on liners and milkers' hands.
3. But unlike cows with Mycoplasma, Staph aureus cows tend to have elevated SCCs.
4. So even if many of them evade the hospital and identification by culture, we can go after them by sampling high SCC cows that have no hospital events on their record.
5. Under the best circumstances, Staph aureus problems can take 2 years to resolve, and in the **absence of a backflush system** in the milking parlor to keep our liners clean between turnouts, the following steps are the basic framework of a control program:
 6. Milkers hold cows with abnormal milk to the hospital before milking them into the line. These are found by forestripping **three squirts out of each quarter** during udder prep.
 7. Each month after weigh day take milk samples from the **80 highest SCC cows without a recent mastitis event**. Change gloves between each cow while sampling these.
 8. Submit a **bulk tank sample each week** for culture as a backup for the creamery tank culture reports.
 9. Keep a **close eye on creamery counts**, especially the Lab Pasteurized Count (LPC). This tells us how good a job we are doing at cleaning the milking system, including the liners.
 10. Change liners on time, as well as milk hoses. Old rubber develops defects that harbor bacteria.
 11. **Switch to a short-life liner if you are not already using one.**
 12. Except for springers coming fresh with Staph aureus and cows that can be dry-treated, the pathogen is not responsive to treatment, so positive animals need to leave the herd for the welfare of the rest.
 13. **Single-use towels** are best for udder prep during this battle, and change gloves between each cow in the hospital and at dry-off treatment.
 14. **Post dip** targets contagious mastitis, so use an iodine or chlorine dioxide for the kill.