

# Make Mastitis Records Pay Off

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 PSU Dairy Extension  
 STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Simple patterns in somatic cell score help to identify causes of mastitis. Looking at somatic cell score arranged by days-in-milk and lactation number often yields recognizable patterns. If cows with 10-40 days-in-milk have higher average somatic cell score than cows with 41-100 days, and the average somatic cell score is greater for older cows in similar stages of lactation, this signifies

environmental mastitis shortly before or shortly after calving. If the pattern is similar for first and second or third lactation animals, dirty conditions in dry cow housing and freshening pens is suspected.

Continuing to evaluate the data across the lactations, if the average somatic cell score increases with days-in-milk after peak lactation and is greater for older cows, chronic mastitis is suspected. Contagious bacteria, often *Strep. ag.* or *Staph. aureus*, are probably

being passed at milking time as a result of improper hygiene or milking equipment operation. Graphing the monthly somatic cell score by lactation number over 10 to 12 sample periods can refine this evaluation. Look for points above 3.0 in most herds. Sometimes it helps to draw a line at this level on the graph as the threshold.

A more powerful technique,

although more difficult to assemble, is to use new infections as the criteria in a table. Determine the first time each cow's somatic cell score is greater than 3.9. List these by month (January through December), days-in-milk, or tests one through 10, by lactation number (1 through 3+), and/or group number. Then list number of cows greater than 4 for approximately the last 24 months. With these data, look for patterns of when

cows became infected and identify management conditions that could contribute to an increased incidence of elevated somatic cell score. Simply look for the month, days-in-milk, and lactation number with the most cows greater than 4. This suggests when cows first became infected. Design changes in management to lower infection rates then monitor the success. Re-evaluate the results periodically, set goals, and make new plans as required.



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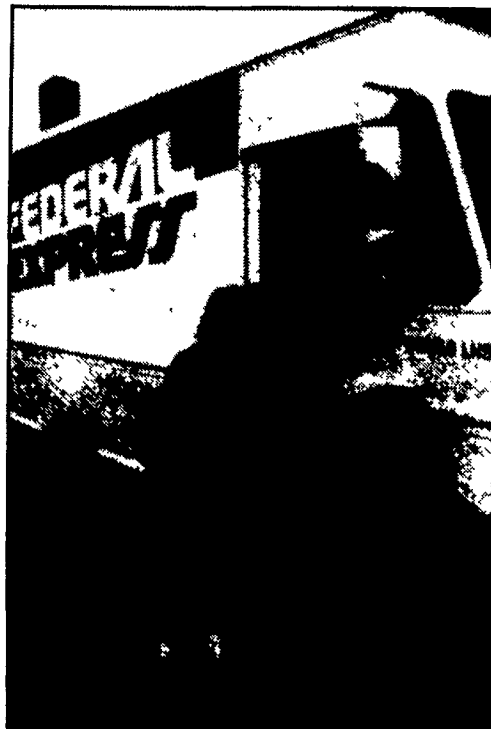
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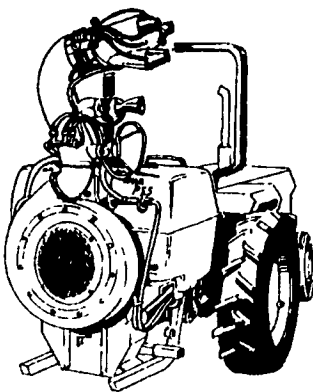
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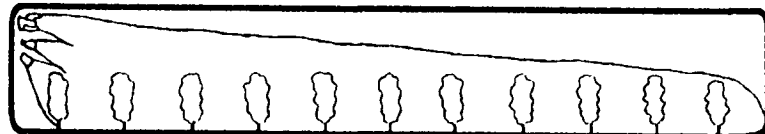


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