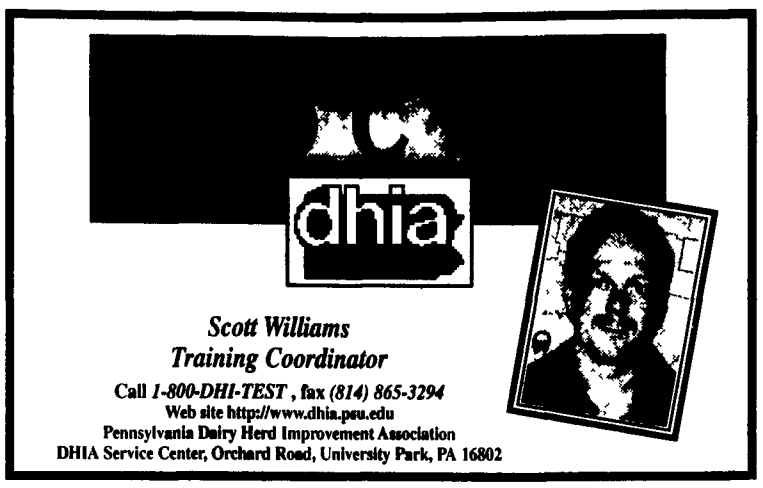


Question: For a long time our bulk tank somatic cell count has stayed between 300,000 and 400,000. We have tried everything we know, but cannot make progress at lowering it. What can you suggest?

Answer: You are not alone with this type of frustration. Recently I came across data showing that there is a national upward trend in SCC. In 1996, average SCC among DHI herds across the country was 307,100 climbing to 313,500 in 1997 and 318,000 during 1998. The following is taken from a table of data and we will look at some local surrounding states.

This data suggests that what you are seeing in your herd is not out of the ordinary. This is not to say that your desire to improve is anything short of admirable, but realize that getting and staying better requires commitment and management for what may seem at times to be meager improvements.

This best advice that I can give in this situation is to use information from both the payment samples collected from your bulk tank and the DHIA test day information. The DHIA SCC information can be valuable as a guide to suggest where SCC problems are likely to start in your herd.

The last four months of test day information will be looked at in the following way. All of the cows each month with over a 400,000 SCC will be considered problem cows. Every month from December through March we will look at the cows that reach this level for the first time. This will eliminate repeat offenders month to month.

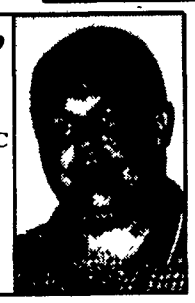
What we see here are a couple of trends that might lead to the proper direction in SCC improvement. First lactation animals and mature as well, approach near 50% infection level at the start of the lactation (6 of 14 and 9 of 20). This similarity might suggest we rule out dry-off management since there is no dry-off for the first lactation animals. The mere fact that we see a large percentage of infections at the start of lactation might also point in the direction of the time period prior to early lactation (prefresh). It would appear that a look at the environment for these cows is in order.

The other two columns reflect that the total number of tests that these cows went through during their lactation so far. They also give the number of

State	Cows/Herd	Daily Milk	Avg. SCC	%Test Days >400,000	%Test Days >750,000
Md.	49.7	66.9	347,000	33.7%	4.3%
NJ	55.4	64.7	377,000	36.1%	8.7%
Ohio	48.2	66.2	350,000	34.0%	6.4%
Pa.	40.8	65.8	331,000	29.3%	3.1%
WVa	59.8	59.5	387,000	41.6%	6.4%

Dairyman To Dairyman

GEORGE CUDOC
PA DHIA
Consulting
Dairyman



times that the 400,000 SCC was surpassed during those tests. First lactation reaches an infection frequency of 34% (31 divided by 92). Older cows stay infected 52% of the time. It would appear that once cows are infected, they have a higer risk of being infected again. The importance of stopping the new infections is apparent.

Now that we have some idea of where infection risk is highest, we can make plans to reach our goals. We also have in place a way to measure progress in attaining that goal.

	Current SCC>400,000	1st test day SCC>400,000	Total # Tests in Lactation	Total # Infections
First Lactation				
March	3	1	34	7
February	5	2	36	12
January	3	1	7	3
December	3	2	15	9
Total	14	6	92	31
Second+ Lactation				
March	11	5	66	40
February	3	1	18	9
January	3	2	12	7
December	3	1	28	8
Total	20	9	124	64

Average Farm Feed Costs for Handy Reference

To help farmers across the state to have handy reference of commodity input costs in their feeding operations for DHIA record sheets or to develop livestock feed cost data, here's last week's average costs of various ingredients as compiled from regional reports across the state of Pennsylvania.

Remember, these are averages, so you will need to adjust your figures up or down according to your location and the quality of your crop.

Corn, No.2y — 2.48 bu., 4.44 cwt.
Wheat, No.2 — 2.31 bu., 3.86 cwt.
Barley, No.3 — 1.75 bu., 3.75 cwt.
Oats, No.2 — 1.59 bu., 4.95 cwt.
Soybeans, No.1 — 4.94 bu., 8.24 cwt.
Ear Corn — 76.87 ton, 3.84 cwt.
Alfalfa Hay — 129.25 ton, 6.46 cwt.
Mixed Hay — 126.75 ton, 6.34 cwt.
Timothy Hay — 128.00 ton, 6.4 cwt.