

Somatic Cell Counts And Profitability

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Milk quality is a very important aspect of a successful management plan on all dairy farms. The somatic cell count (SCC) level in your milk is one of the key measures of quality that dairy plants use to determine the overall quality of milk you produce. Lowering the SCC in your herd can lead to tremendous improvement in profitability of your dairy business in two ways. First, by becoming eligible for quality premiums and secondly by increasing production per cow as a result of better management and improved udder health.

The most successful dairies now and in the future will strive for an average SCC that is less than 200,000 cells per milliliter. This will help to ensure improved profitability and long-term success of their dairy business.

Milk quality premiums can become a significant portion of a dairy producer's milk check each month. Quality premiums from local dairy cooperatives and dairy plants range from nothing for lower quality milk to as much as \$.50 per cwt. for very high quality milk. A 100 cow dairy producing just 18,000 pounds of milk can receive as much as \$9,000 more in quality premi-

ums each year. That can make a very big difference to the bottom line on many dairies here in the Capital Region of Pennsylvania.

There is even a greater financial incentive for improving your dairy cow management and lowering your SCC. That incentive is an increase in production per cow and improved udder health. These improvements will lead to even greater increases in income and a greater potential for a much more profitable dairy business.

There are many management factors that impact milk production and income on a dairy farm. The SCC is just one key factor.

Short checklist of procedures that lower SCC:

- Teat dip all cows.
- Dry cow therapy for all quarters of all cows turned dry.
- Have milking equipment checked by a qualified serviceman twice a year.
- Review milking practices and hygiene with a specialist. Don't use sponges, cloths, or water hoses to wash udders.
- Keep cow udders clean between each milking —

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