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W153-Forms of Mastitis

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UT Extension
W153

Tennessee Quality Milk Initiative

Factsheet

Forms of Mastitis

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Subclinical Mastitis

- Most prevalent and costly form of mastitis
- Animal does not exhibit typical mastitis symptoms
  - No change in udder appearance
  - No observable changes in milk
- Milk production will be lowered, but likely overlooked
- Can only be detected with individual cow somatic cell count (SCC) or microbiological culture
- Infected cows serve as reservoirs and can infect other cows

Clinical Mastitis

- Onset of symptoms may take hours to days from time of infection
- Symptoms may last for days to weeks
- Severity depends on bacteria causing infection
- Symptoms may include:
  - Abnormal milk
    - Flakes or clots
    - Discolored or watery
  - Abnormal udder (swelling, heat, hard or sensitive to touch) may be slight to absent
  - Drop in milk production
- Treatment dependent on type of bacteria, time and duration of treatment

Acute Mastitis

- Sudden onset of symptoms
- Symptoms may include:
  - Fever
  - Off-feed and off-water
  - Rapid pulse
  - Weakness
  - Udder may be red, swollen, hard and/or painful to touch
  - Grossly abnormal milk
  - Dramatic drop in milk production
- Can be caused by coliforms, pseudomonas and other bacteria

Chronic Mastitis

- Of long duration (months to years)
- Symptoms vary depending on phase of infection
  - Cows may remain subclinically infected indefinitely
  - Cows may alter between clinical and subclinical mastitis
- Multiple infections in the same quarter within a lactation or into the next lactation are a sign of chronic mastitis

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