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W185 Quick Guide to Troubleshooting Mastitis

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Use these four steps to approach your mastitis situation systematically.

**Step One - Determine if there is a mastitis problem**
- Problem = if more than 3% of cows have clinical mastitis or are on antibiotic withdrawal
- Use bulk tank milk SCC and DHI SCC to determine subclinical rates and estimate production losses and profit losses using SCC
- High Quality = Average SCC less than 300,000 cells/ml
  - Approximately 6% of quarters infected; small loss of production
  - Lowering herd average SCC must be an economical decision
- Average Quality = Average SCC 300,000-400,000 cells/ml
  - Over 10% of quarters infected; production and profit loss due to subclinical mastitis
  - Lowering herd average SCC should be an economical decision
  - To lower average SCC, focus attention on high SCC groups
- Poor Quality = Average SCC 400,000-600,000 cells/ml
  - Approximately 16% of quarters infected; significant production and profit loss due to clinical and subclinical mastitis
  - Elevated risk of exceeding regulatory limit
  - Lowering average SCC will have positive economic impact
- Very Poor Quality = Average SCC count over 600,000 cells/ml
  - Substantial number of cows infected
  - Substantial production and profit loss
  - Very high risk of exceeding regulatory limits
  - Immediate action needed

**Step Two - Identify cause of infections**
- Determine which mastitis pathogens cause most infections - contagious or environmental
- Knowing which type of pathogen will help to develop an efficient treatment plan

**Step Three - Evaluate the situation**
- A third-party should evaluate the farm, management, facilities and equipment for contributors to mastitis problem
- Both types of pathogens (contagious vs. environmental) may require specific evaluations
  - Contagious = parlor and antibiotic therapy evaluations are priority
  - Environmental = environment and antibiotic therapy evaluations are priority
- For a meaningful evaluation, be forthcoming on daily management and farm activities

**Step Four - Address the situation**
- You cannot solve all problems at once
- Prioritize solutions based on contribution to problem and cost of correcting