

# Prevention of Mastitis in Fresh Cows

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Mastitis is the most economically challenging disease on a dairy farm. This is due to losses in unrealized milk production, treatment costs, increased risk of culling, and discarded milk production. Mastitis can also lead to an assortment of other problems, such as troubles with reproduction. Fresh dairy cows and heifers are the most susceptible to mastitis. During early lactation, fresh cows immune systems are lowered causing their defense mechanisms against infection to be decreased. The best way to avoid mastitis in your herd is prevention. The majority of preventive measures against mastitis need to start in the dry period. Here are some key points to consider on how to minimize mastitis in your fresh dairy cows:

1. **Environment:** A clean environment will optimize prevention of environmental mastitis pathogens. For dry cows housed on pasture, provide your cows with shade that is rotated between fields and/or trees. For dry cows housed in a barn, clean comfortable bedding can make a significant difference in mastitis prevention.
2. **Nutrition:** Adding the suggested amount and type of minerals and vitamins to your cows feed can help boost their immune system and help their body fight off the mastitis pathogens. Proper amounts of energy and protein are also needed for a strong immune system.
3. **Prevent Metabolic Disorders:** Metabolic disorders, such as ketosis, arise when the cow goes into negative energy balance; aka is not consuming enough feed to meet her needs. It is critical to keep your fresh cows eating during this time. However, it is also very critical not to over feed energy to dry cows.
4. **Vaccination:** Establishing a vaccination protocol for dry and fresh cows can significant reduce mastitis in your herd. You should work with your veterinarian to find a vaccination schedule that works for you and your farm.
5. **Dry Cow Treatment:** The use of dry cow antibiotic therapy and internal teat sealants help prevent fresh cow mastitis by helping to cure previous infections, while also helping to prevent new ones.

Here are some other things to consider when trying to reduce mastitis, as always these should be applied to all groups of cows:

- Am I providing an adequate and clean, dry bedding for cows to lie in?
- Are my cows fairly clean upon entering the milking parlor?
- Am I wearing gloves while milking?
- Do I use a different cloth or paper towel for each cow? If cloth, am I doing at least 2 of the 3 things while laundering: 1) Washing with detergent and bleach 2) Using hot water >170 degrees Fahrenheit 3) Drying using a heated cycle.
- Are the teats completely cleaned and dry before attaching the milking unit?
- Do I post dip teats after milking with an effective germicide?
- Am I using dry cow therapy and/or a teat sealant to decrease prior infections and prevent new ones? <https://nmconline.org/drycow.htm>

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