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to prevent mastitis, but they strive for healthy cows with a healthy immune system. Cows and heifers are vaccinated with Lysigin to prevent Staphylococcus Aureus. At dry off, cows are treated with a dry cow intramammary treatment as well as a teat sealant. The Stafne's are serviced by IBA. IBA changes their milking inflations as part of their regular maintenance schedule.

Prep procedure: Pre-dip with iodine based dip. Strip 3-4 squirts out of each teat feeling and watching for mastitis. Re-dip. Dry and wipe teat clean with a disposable dry towel, fold in half and wipe with other side to thoroughly clean. Attach unit. The Stafne's have auto-takeoffs which Bonnie mentioned being helpful for consistency. The cows are post-dipped with an iodine barrier dip. Bonnie wanted to point out they make sure to attach the milkers within 45-60 seconds from the time the cow is first pre-dipped, and how it is thought that this best uses the oxytocin let-down. They also visually monitor and feel all quarters when the cows are done. Bonnie noted that they pay attention to inflation squawking as that can lead to mastitis.

The Stafne's use a quarter milker for cows that have mastitis. They only treat mastitis for antibiotics if the cow becomes sick. She said that they will use DHIA testing of individual cows and even individual quarters to monitor where SCC problems might be coming from. Though the Stafne's are long-time quality milk producers, they aren't immune from flare ups. Last summer they had a mastitis/SCC flare up that led them to go over their milking equipment thoroughly. They checked their vacuum and ohms of resistance on units, and ended up tearing apart their milking units and pulsators to replace worn parts. They also went through the whole milking system at this time to replace other gaskets and worn parts.

Note from Angie: Weathered rubber in our milking systems--especially the rubber on our milking units, can cause more problems than we may realize and ultimately lead to mastitis. Keeping the vacuum at the right level for your setup can keep teat end health in check. IBA or other like businesses have the ability to do tests on milking systems to check vacuum, pulsation, washing, or other system issues.

Mitch Thompson--Spring Valley, WI

SCC: Consistently around 100,000 for a few years, but had been around 200,000.

Milking is done in a tie stall barn with sawdust bedding. Stalls are scraped multiple times a day to keep cows clean. Mitch milks mostly himself with help as needed. His milking equipment has been evaluated to make sure vacuum is not causing teat end issues, and that his pulsators and units are working as expected. IBA changes Mitch's inflations on a schedule so that no milking is done with worn out inflations. He uses a vented inflation.

Mitch consistently had an SCC of around 200,000 and then started having more mastitis flare-ups during the summer of 2018. He had Bill's IBA evaluate his equipment and upon finding that everything was working as expected, the idea of changing post-dip was brought to Mitch's attention. Mitch had been using a 1% Iodine post-dip and changed to IBA's Transcend which is an Iodine-based barrier dip. Right before he changed to this barrier post-dip the SCC had been sampling at 400,000 for a few days and within a week it was down to 250,000 and then by winter a handful of months later it was down to 100,000 where it has remained since. Mitch made it clear that this barrier dip was the reason for successfully dropping his herd's SCC. Though it costs more than his previous post-dip, he gains in higher quality premiums, less dumped milk, less treatment costs, and less frustrations.

Mitch is also very fond of IBA's UltraMint. When he has a cow with mastitis flakes or a hard quarter he will use UltraMint lotion on the quarter, and 80-90% of the time the mastitis or hard quarter will heal itself within a few days without further treatment. He also notes that the UltraMint is helpful on fresh cow edema! If he has a cow with a fever, or who isn't feeling well due to mastitis he will use an intramammary antibiotic treatment, but this is a rare occasion.

Mitch's prepping routine: He uses a diaper wipe towel to wipe off any debris. Strips 3 squirts out of each teat. Pre-dip with a .5% iodine pre-dip. Wipe clean with another diaper wipe towel within 30-60 seconds. Attach unit. Mitch has auto-takoffs. When the unit comes off, the barrier dip is used. Mitch feels that having a good diet for his cows is also a big part of his SCC management. He did include in the interview that he uses Tomorrow Dry Cow Treatment and a teat sealant at dry off. Chronic mastitis cows are culled to help keep SCC in check.

Note from Angie: We also use UltraMint on our farm and can attest that it is AMAZING! We are able to keep our SCC around 120,000 or less, but we do notice that flare ups can easily be managed by UltraMint. We had an extended flare up in 2019 into 2020. Our SCC had previously been around 125,000, and had jumped to 170,000. We did bulk tank cultures, mastitis cow milk cultures and determined that we should change from an iodine pre-dip to a hydrogen peroxide pre-dip. We have had great results. We also use a dry powder post-dip when temperatures are below freezing on our farm. Our cows have to walk outdoors from the parlor to the freestall barn, and we found that this eliminated scabby or frostbitten teats for our herd. I also recall learning in college that the highest SCC milk is in the foremilk which is stripped out during prepping.

By: Angie Bocksell,
Board Member & ECC Patron, Pepin, WI



February 2021

Bocksell asks, "Have You Evaluated Your Somatic Cell Count Lately?"

In an effort to keep you abreast of industry changes and challenges, and provide the best information from the farmer's perspective, Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery board member and fellow-patron, Angie Bocksell, was asked to share about the topic of Somatic Cell Count. While always an important topic, the timeliness of this subject will become even more evident when reading, "Changes to the Milk Quality Program" on page 3 of this newsletter.

Let's start off with a refresher! What is Somatic Cell Count (SCC)? SCC is one of our indicators of milk quality. The majority of Somatic Cells are white blood cells that become present in milk as part of the body's natural response to an intramammary infection, aka Mastitis.

A small portion of the Somatic Cells are epithelial cells that are shed from the mammary tissue due to an infection. All mammals who secrete milk have a SCC---but those of us in the dairy industry are accustomed to watching this number. From a farm standpoint we watch the SCC number because it helps us manage our herds, but also because we know that the lower the SCC number the higher our quality premium(\$\$\$).

To put it bluntly---mastitis is frustrating! No one likes hooking up a trap pail to catch treated or mastitis milk that can't be sold; and I think we can all agree that it's pretty inefficient to plug the milk filter and "trap out", losing our precious milk and time. With that said, our industry has identified acceptable SCC levels---but as business owners we owe it to ourselves to evaluate our SCC from time to time and challenge ourselves to do better.

So, how can you manage the SCC on your farm? There are basic things like changing your milking inflations on time, and far more complicated threats such as stray voltage. Cow prep techniques, cow environment/

bedding, feeding strategies, milking equipment maintenance, and overall health management of our herds play roles in our SCC levels.

Every time the milk hauler comes, the hauler samples our bulk tanks giving us results for a whole herd average SCC, BUT you can also have a bulk tank culture taken to know what kinds of pathogens can be cultured from your milk. You can also send in individual cow/quarter samples for pathogen labs or individual cow SCC. Knowing the specific pathogens your herd might be shedding can help you determine your road to recovery.

I took some time to interview a few of our fellow patrons to get a snapshot of their SCC management. We have farmers within our membership who have overcome stray voltage, and have overcome mastitis breakouts within their herds --- so please be encouraged if you are struggling to reduce your SCC!

Bonnie and Mike Stafne--Clayton, WI
SCC: 75,000-80,000, pretty consistently for many years.

Milking is done in a tie stall barn by a mix of owners and employees. They run their vacuum system at 15#/sq. ft. The stalls are bedded with chopped straw and stalls are scraped multiple times during the day to keep cows clean. During the interview Bonnie mentioned that she feels the consistency in their prepping procedure and equipment maintenance are large parts of SCC management but that she finds that she enjoys the challenge of problem solving when a flare up happens. Using bulk tank cultures, they have found that their biggest mastitis issue is Klebsiella, which is a pathogen that can be found in the cow's environment. They don't specifically feed any additives

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ECC Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery's Annual Meeting on Tuesday, March 30, 2021.

Once again this year the event will take place virtually. Board member elections will be held and Milk Quality Award winners will be announced.

Watch your email inbox for your invitation. This email will contain a web link to access the virtual annual meeting using your computer or mobile device. PLEASE KEEP THIS LINK IN A SAFE PLACE.

On the day of the meeting, we recommend you join the virtual conference a few minutes early. If you run into any unforeseen technical challenges you can then work to resolve them before the meeting gets underway. During the meeting, comments in the chat area will be monitored. You are welcome to ask questions.

The election process will be conducted using a "dual-envelope" system to ensure voting privacy and preserve confidentiality. The ballot itself will not be signed—instead it will be inserted into a ballot envelope and sealed. This ballot envelope will be inserted into a second outer envelope that needs to be signed with your patron number.

The ballots and envelopes will be delivered via your hauler. Please complete and return your ballot promptly. Your ballot must be received at the Creamery by Friday, March 26, 2021.

Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery Annual Meeting
12:30pm, virtual via Zoom
Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Change is Coming for You

By Paul Bauer, CEO, Manager
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Wisconsin lies squarely in the middle of the continent. We are far from each coast, centered between the equator and North Pole, and change is happening all around the world that will come to our backyard. Many like to think this change won't happen and don't prepare. However, it's coming whether we like it or not.

There is a shift taking place within our consumer demographic. Unless you travel, read, or listen to coastal trends you may be unprepared for what is coming. The younger population is becoming the largest purchaser of goods. This demographic demands that businesses, including your farm, adhere to principles and concepts they hold dear. The main changes will revolve around animal care, environmental stewardship, and worker welfare. When these changes came to the business world in the 50's and 60's, agriculture was left out of the reform that took place. Well, these changes for recording and demonstrating efforts in these areas are being pushed not so much by the government but by corporations and activist groups. Those that underestimate the power of the consumer and activists do so at their own peril and risk of extinction to their livelihood.

The recent election will speed up the changes in many areas. Animal care will continue to be refined and "improved" as this group further defines what it's looking for in animal care.

Environmental stewardship will become the primary focus of the new administration, businesses and activists alike. Currently the administration is

trying to pursue tax credits to solicit change to improve greenhouse gas environmental practices. These changes are voluntary at the moment but may become a mandatory requirement in order to continue farming.

Worker Wellness is on its way to becoming established in the agricultural cultural sector. Recent court cases have changed the way farms must pay their employees. Farms in the west are now required to pay overtime to workers where they were previously exempt. More rules and regulations will be coming to farmers as they are brought into the same working environment and conditions as other businesses. This can either be voluntary or become mandatory as time progresses.

It is easy to say, "These changes won't affect us—we're too far north," or, "We are north of Hwy 8, no one cares." However, this is not true. People do care and they do monitor what you do. They watch what you do, and they want you to do a good job.

We are dependent on a consumer driven economy—no one needs our product. Therefore, if we don't comply with these new social expectations, they have other options for where to purchase dairy products. We want to make products they want to purchase in order to drive a return to the owners of the cooperative.

What can each member do? Learn about the Animal Care changes, Environmental Stewardship, and Worker Wellness. There are a lot of resources to reference. Start applying them to your farm. As an example, Worker

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Changes to the Milk Quality Program

The Creamery has not changed its quality program in a very long time (I think 6 years ago). The reason the program has not change is it directs and rewards farmers to produce good quality milk. Every year we see the milk shed is getting better in quality. The entire milk shed earns \$.47/cwt for low somatic cell count (SCC). This puts the average milk at 180 to 200 SCC.

One component of monitoring our milk shed is compliance with the European Union milk standards. They have a three-month geometric limit of 400 on SCC and 100 on bacteria. Last year we had 39 farms that exceeded that standard.

Many plants are not accepting milk that does not meet that standard. Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery has continued to work with members to get that number down on farms which do not meet the EU standard. The information on SCC and bacteria goes to the IMS, which is part of the USDA. The Interstate Milk Shipping imposes a fee for the 3 month geometric average associated with SCC and bacteria called a degradation. This fee is paid by the farmer. The EU is starting to ask why we are not lowering the SCC on individual farms to prevent repeats on the IMS degradation.

The Creamery does have a lot of time involved in the process of monitoring and correcting the EU limits. We must separately enter farms into a IMS database, respond with what action we are taking, and bill the farmer for missing the limits. The field staff will be doing site visits and explaining what is going on. We spend approximately \$90,000 a year in degradations on 39 farms. This is why other dairy plants do not allow farms to have an IMS degradation.

The board of directors, to preserve our ability to market milk with the EU certification and provide the time needed to change milk quality, are taking a proactive stance to reduce the number of farms on the IMS degradation list. One change is the cost of a degradation will go up to \$800. A second degradation may result in the loss of membership. The board wishes to express that if a farmer is working to solve the issue the Creamery will work with them. This is a significant change.

In addition to the higher fee, the board made the change to deduct milk over 400 on SCC. This is a lower deduct than the prior limit of 500 on SCC. The deducts at 401 SCC will be \$.10 and go up to \$5.00 per CWT for over 751 SCC. The goal is to send a very strong signal to produce good quality milk.

Big picture, we can continue to market milk, cream, and whey to other companies by reducing the number of degradations. A higher quality milk shed allows for better quality products and plants that are easier to operate. These are changes that will help make our entire milk supply reflective of our quality products.

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Wellness can cover standardized training of employees. Even when working as a family unit, it is important to have the cows treated washed, milked, and dipped equally.

We all have choices, and the consumers are making theirs. In greater numbers they are making the decision to support products that aligns with their ideals. Will your farm be part of their choice?

2021 Scholarship Program

We are currently accepting applications for the 2021 Scholarship Program! The goal of the program is to provide scholarships to members of our cooperative's families that wish to continue their post – high school education in agriculture at a two year technical school or four year university.

Scholarship criteria and the application form are available from the Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery in Ellsworth and can also be completed/downloaded online via the Creamery's website.

To download the application, visit EllsworthCheese.com. Scroll down to the very bottom of the page (white footer), and click on "Members". The application deadline is March 31, 2021.

Women of the Farm

Despite lingering COVID-19 restrictions we carried on our Women of the Farm tradition last month... virtually!

Participants gathered online via Zoom for an Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery update by Paul Bauer, Manager/CEO. Michelle Steen, Human Resource Director, also presented, giving her perspective on hiring.

The event concluded with attendees opening their event cheese boxes, which had been delivered prior to the event by the milk haulers. The contents included all the makings for a great charcuterie board! Kari Skibbie, Director of Sales, then guided everyone through a cheese and wine tasting.

While always a fun event, we miss seeing everyone — Let's hope in 2022 we can gather in person!