



Exploring fresh ways to safeguard against mastitis at dry off

Mastitis remains a constant worry on dairy farms around New Zealand. In 2016, DairyNZ and dairy vets joined forces for an important initiative to reduce use of antibiotics at the critical point of dry off. Their project successfully gained Sustainable Farming Fund assistance.

To keep udders healthy and free of mastitis, nine out of every ten cows currently receive some form of intramammary protection during the dry period. Most are long acting antibiotics that must be used sparingly to stay effective.

Industry bodies are therefore moving to reduce use over the next five years, restricting it to specific cows.

This project will provide clear, practical and defensible treatment guidelines to help vets and farmers make better decisions around antibiotic use at dry off and transition successfully to alternatives.

Trials are underway to define criteria for herds and cows requiring antibiotic treatment at dry off, and best practice recommendations for using alternatives.

Results from a national field study across 36 herds already confirm the effectiveness of alternative treatments across different farm environments. Vets and farmers have responded well to these findings.

A second study is underway this winter. Overall findings will be shared more widely later this year and into autumn 2019.

The work and findings of this initiative are set to deliver benefits for the dairy industry and cow welfare alike – and we look forward to those final results.
