



MASTITIS – AN OVERVIEW

AIM: TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON MASTITIS, HOW IT IS DIAGNOSED AND CAUSED.

NOTE: This fact sheet is one of a series on mastitis and milking practices.

1. What is mastitis?

- Mastitis is an infection of the udder. It is caused by bacteria entering the teat opening.
- The infection can cause visible changes in the udder and the milk. This is called **CLINICAL MASTITIS**.
- The infection can also cause more subtle changes. You may not see changes in the cow, or her milk. This is called **SUBCLINICAL MASTITIS**.

2. How do I know if my animal has clinical mastitis?

- If your animal has clinical mastitis, you'll be able to see changes in her udder, teats and milk:
 - ✓ Quarter(s) swollen and not milked out properly;
 - ✓ Quarter(s) hotter or colder than the other quarters;
 - ✓ Changes in the milk:
 - Clots;
 - Watery;
 - Colour changes;
 - ✓ Clots on the milking sieve;
 - ✓ Cow uncomfortable when being milked due to painful udder.



3. How do I know if my animal has subclinical mastitis?

- Signs are not always obvious, but there may be a reduction in milk production.
- To check if there is mastitis, use a Rapid Mastitis Test (RMT). You can make RMT at home using Sunlight dishwashing liquid. *See separate fact sheet.*
- California Mastitis Test (CMT) is an RMT, but this can be costly.



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4. How do cows get mastitis?

- Mastitis can be caused by different types of bacteria.
- When the bacteria enter the teat canal, they can cause mastitis. Therefore, it is important to have **good hygiene at milking time**, when the teat canals are open. Good hygiene around milking time can prevent bacteria entering the teat canal and causing mastitis.

5. Where do cows get the mastitis causing bacteria from?

- Some bacteria live in the **cow's udder** or on her teats.
- Some bacteria live in the **cow's environment**, e.g. milking parlour.
- Bacteria can be spread by contact with:
 - ✓ Splashes of infected milk;
 - ✓ Milker's hands;
 - ✓ Tissues/towels used to wipe teats before milking;
 - ✓ Dirty milking parlour;
 - ✓ Dirty bedding;
 - ✓ Mud in kraals.



Muddy kraals and parlours



Dirty hands



Dirty water to wash teats

REMEMBER:

- Mastitis can be more common during the wet season when there's lots of mud and dirt;
- Always have **good milking hygiene** and follow **good practices**;
- **Prevention** is better and often cheaper than treatment;
- *See fact sheets on practices, prevention, treatment and testing.*

Contact your local extension or veterinary officer for further information and support.

ZDTP is focused on supporting dairy farmers to improve their productivity, milk quality and linkages to urban markets. The views expressed in this publication are those of the implementers of the programme and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Zealand Government. For further information, please contact ZDTP on zdtpinfo@primeconsultants.net. Follow us on www.zambiadairy.com, Facebook (facebook.com/zambiadairy/) and Twitter (@DairyZambia).