

## New approach to mastitis ‘almost halves’ farmer’s costs



At a recent event hosted on Bryn Jones’ farm near Oswestry local farmers heard how AHDB Dairy’s Mastitis Control Plan had helped him to significantly reduce the rate of new clinical mastitis cases and reduce antibiotic

use across his 800-cow herd, delivering annual savings of around £57,000.

This downward trend is encouraging as the livestock industry works towards achieving a long term reduction in the use of antibiotics.

The joint event organised by AHDB Dairy and Farming Connect farmers looked at a number of topics such as ways to reduce new infections, lowering antibiotic use, avoiding inappropriate use, selective dry cow therapy principles, a practical demonstration of the infusion technique, reducing infection pressure and optimising cow immunity.

Speaking at the event Dr James Breen, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Specialist in Cattle Health and Production, said: “Antibiotic use in mastitis control often accounts for the largest proportion of prescriptions in dairy herds, for example recent work from the Netherlands showed nearly 70% of antibiotics were for udder health reasons, and 24% of these for clinical mastitis alone.”

Dr Breen shared the Mastitis Control Plan, which provides a structured approach to mastitis control and provides a diagnosis based on udder health records, enabling farmers to identify and prioritise appropriate interventions. He then introduced Bryn Jones who talked about his experience at Nantgoch.

Bryn Jones commented: “Three years ago we were experiencing a very high rate of clinical mastitis with lots of recurrent cows, costing us money we could ill afford. A member of our local foot group was already using James Breen to help tackle mastitis and Neil Blackburn from Kite encouraged us to do the same.”

From on-farm records, the incidence rate of clinical mastitis averaged close to 70 cases per 100 cows each year, meaning the total cost of mastitis on the farm was around £120,000 every year. Halving this mastitis rate would therefore be expected to recover around £60,000 a year...

Following that initial conversation, Bryn and the team at Nantgoch received several part-funded visits from Dr Breen which helped begin the implementation of the Mastitis Control Plan for the farm.

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The mastitis and cell count data for Nantgoch clearly highlighted that the majority of new infections were acquired during the dry period, and the Plan identified key actions that would reduce this new infection rate, such as changes to transition cow cubicle accommodation and improved management of the calving cow yard.

Between 2014-15 and 2015-16 there were 256 less cases of mastitis overall. The annual mastitis rate now stood at around 30 cases per 100 cows and farm-specific figures showed that the total cost for mastitis was now around £63,000 - a saving of £57,000 - the vast majority of which came through better control of clinical mastitis.

“We were using less and less mastitis tubes, so I knew cases were coming down. Even so, I was staggered when I saw that we’d cut our costs in half. It shows that if you put the Mastitis Control Plan in place and follow it through, you’ll see the benefit.” Bryn continued.

Further information about AHDB Dairy’s Mastitis Control Plan can be found on their website [ahdb.org.uk](http://ahdb.org.uk)

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