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**for your  
herd's health**

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**Winter 2015**

**Focus on  
Mycoplasma!  
Keep this bug  
out of your  
herd**

**Special testing  
required for  
Mycoplasma;  
further  
information  
available**

**Know  
your bugs:  
Staph aureus  
- a mastitis  
that's difficult  
to cure**

**Tips from the  
back of the  
vet's car!**

*Hi there!*

In this issue of Your Herd's Health we are highlighting a type of mastitis that is uncommon and generally "off the radar", but it is a disease you definitely don't want in your herd. We believe that only about 2% of herds in Victoria are infected with it, so our advice is centered on keeping it *out* of your herd.

In addition, we are starting a "Get to know the bug" section, so you can better interpret and act on information many of you receive from milk cultures of mastitis cases.

Lastly I'll give you some tricks of the trade!

## **Mycoplasma**

Get to know this word! Mycoplasma bacteria have been a significant problem in Aussie herds since 2006 and it has been found in all dairy regions. It causes significant losses in production, culling and deaths in both cows and calves.

Cows may carry Mycoplasma without showing any signs of infection and these carriers are an important

source of infection whether they are introduced or homebred.

Mycoplasma do not cause typical infections. Often more than one quarter is involved, there is little swelling or inflammation, and the milk tends to go watery rather than have clots in it. Quarters are often slack rather than swollen and firm.

The bug is readily spread from one quarter to another in the same cow or from one cow to another via milker's hands or liners. Cows can also be infected via contact with nasal or uterine fluid. Semen, embryos or contaminated equipment can also transmit infection.

It is important to note that routine milk cultures will NOT grow Mycoplasma!



The first indication that Mycoplasma might be a problem in your herd is an unexplained rise in the Bulk Milk Cell Count.

Mycoplasma is also a cause of joint infection and therefore a cause of potential loss of both cows and calves.

The best test for Mycoplasma is called a PCR test performed on the milk or joint fluid of suspect infected animals.

Okay, so the bottom line is this: If your herd is uninfected, and you are purchasing cows, hold them separate and milk them last. Test their milk (which can be "pooled") for Mycoplasma - and another bug called Strep agalactiae. Prevention is way, way better than cure! Talk to us if you suspect infection in your herd!

More information on Mycoplasma can be found at <http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Home/Standard-Items/Search-Results.aspx?q=mycoplasma&page=1>

## Getting to know the bugs: Staph aureus

Staph is one of the most common bacteria we find in milk cultures. It is an important finding! Its importance centres around the fact that only 80% of cases are cured. This means one in every 5 cases are not cured. If retained in the herd, these cows are a persistent source of infection for other cows.

Why are Staph infections difficult to cure? Infections with this bacteria cause persistent abscesses within the quarter. Abscesses are areas of pus walled off within the udder by scar tissue. This wall of scar tissue protects the bacteria from antibiotics and the cow's own defence mechanisms. Abscesses can subsequently rupture and seed the quarter with millions of bacteria, infecting other parts of the quarter, other quarters, and via the liners or milker's hands, other cows!

For this reason, Staph is seen as a cow-to-cow contagious bacteria (rather than environmental).

Staph is found on normally on cow's skin and can invade the udder at milking time, especially if teat disinfection is not fully effective.

Subclinical infections of Staph are best treated in the dry period, and repeat infections (three times in one lactation or between lactations in the same quarter) are best culled. If you receive a Staph result from a milk culture, record this as "a black mark", and take action on repeat offenders.

## Tips from the back of the vet's car!

I've seen a lot of "calf's head back" calvings recently, and these can be really tricky. It is difficult to reach the calf's head, let alone bring it up and forward into the correct position.

Put a rope or chain around one of the calf's legs and get a helper to pull the calf up and out. While being unable to deliver the calf, it brings the head closer to you.

Curl an index finger into the calf's mouth between the upper and lower lips to gain traction, and move the head closer to the exit. Then stop pulling the calf up, and push it back into the cow to create room. Once you have got some room, move the head into the cow's pelvic canal, ready for delivery. Or call the vet!



*Devoted vets...*

*Prevention, prevention, prevention!*

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### Clinic Hours

Monday and Thursday: 8am to 7 pm

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: 8am to 5pm

Saturday: 9am to 12 noon