

# FARMER GUIDE

## IMPROVING UDDER HEALTH AROUND DRYING OFF

For optimal udder health and mastitis control the period around drying off needs to be managed carefully. Management measures should be aimed at reducing milk production as quickly as possible whilst preventing bacteria from entering the udder.

### ▶ Abrupt drying off

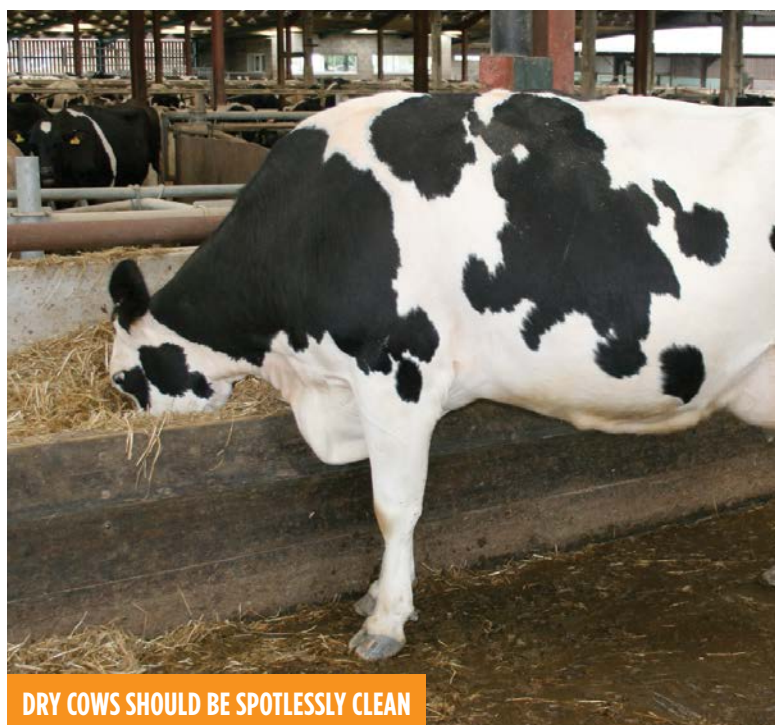
- This is the most effective technique of drying cows off
- Milk her normally right up to the final milking
- **Techniques such as reducing milking to once a day or stopping milking briefly before drying off, run the risk of an increased number of new infections**

### ▶ High yielding cows

- Cows giving 20 litres or more at drying off are more likely to pick up new infections (these may cause problems in the next lactation)<sup>1</sup>
- If you see a high percentage of cows leaking milk post-dry off, it may be worthwhile altering your management
- Some farmers have been successful in reducing energy/protein content of feed in the run up to drying off
- **Take specialist advice prior to altering feeding strategy, as any major dietary changes can affect dry matter intakes**

### ▶ Environment

- Dry cows should be kept in the cleanest accommodation available
- If turning cows out after drying off, ensure that for at least the first few days they can be observed for signs of mastitis
- If possible, house recently dried off cows away from the sounds of the parlour and hungry calves to help a rapid reduction of milk production



DRY COWS SHOULD BE SPOTLESSLY CLEAN

### ▶ Dry cow therapy

- Treat cows with dry cow therapy as advised by your vet
- Always take strict hygienic precautions when administering dry cow products
  - Make it a separate job to milking
  - Take your time
  - Follow a strict disinfection protocol (see the Farmer guide to infusion of intramammary products)
- Consider the use of antibiotic dry cow therapy and internal teat sealant for the most comprehensive dry cow protection and mastitis control

1. Dingwell et al PREV. Vet. Med. 63 (2004) 75-89