



Best practices to prevent medicine residues in milk



General guidelines

Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of conditions affecting cows should be provided by your veterinary surgeon and outlined in your Herd Health Plan. Your veterinary surgeon will prescribe medicine treatments when they are required. Treatments not listed in the plan should not be used. Every effort should be made to reduce the use of antibiotics on farm to reduce the risk of contaminating the food chain.

Does the treatment protocol include the use of a medicine? **NO** No action is necessary.

YES
Use the medicine as directed by the prescribing veterinary surgeon.
1. Mark the animal before you treat it.
2. Record the treatment in the medicines book, including date of all treatments, cow ID, product used, batch number, dose and withdrawal period end date (statutory requirement).
3. Keep a list of all treated cows somewhere obvious, e.g. a memo board in the parlour.
4. Remember, bought-in cows may have been treated without your knowledge.

Does this treatment trigger a milk withdrawal period? **NO** Follow the instruction on the product.

YES
Keep the milk out of the bulk tank until after the withdrawal period.
ON LABEL Your veterinary surgeon may prescribe the use of a medicine off-label, in which case they will advise on the subsequent withdrawal period, which will be a minimum of 7 days for milk and 28 days for meat. It is good practice to test the milk before putting in the tank.
OFF LABEL

- Ensure that medicines are obtained from a legal source. Be clear on the medicine withdrawal times and ensure that they are followed.
- If an antibiotic residue contamination is suspected, **contact your milk purchaser immediately**.
- Follow data sheet and veterinary advice at all times. **Off-label** treatment (unlicensed combinations of products, varied dose, an altered route of administration, altered dose frequency or prolonged treatment) will affect withdrawal times. Only a veterinary surgeon can decide whether a medicine can be used in an off label treatment.
- If residues are detected where they were not expected following the use of a product in line with a veterinary surgeon's instructions, this should be reported to the veterinary practice, to the company whose product was used and to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/adversereactionreporting/>)

Avoiding accidental contamination during the milking routine

Are treated cows and those under milk withdrawal milked with the rest of the main herd? **NO**
1. Milk last.
2. Ensure the milk transfer line is disconnected from the bulk tank and connected to a suitable vessel before milking.
3. Ensure all animals are obviously marked in case they escape.
4. Fully wash equipment with detergent and disinfect the plant before it is next used.

YES
Are treated cows clearly marked in a way that is visible to the person milking? **NO** Use at least 2 methods of identification e.g. tail tape, leg band.

YES
Are treated cows milked into a separate dump line or bucket with a separate cluster? **NO** Use a separate dump line or bucket with a separate cluster and milk last.

YES
Ensure that all dump milk is collected and disposed of in an appropriate manner. Milk from cows treated with antibiotics **SHOULD NOT** be fed to calves.

Unless advised by your veterinary surgeon, follow the manufacturer's instructions for the correct number of treatments, treatment interval, dose rate and withdrawal period. If in doubt, always consult your veterinary surgeon, who may recommend an appropriate withdrawal period and/or the use of a suitable antibiotic residue test.



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Procedures specific to dry cows

Review your Herd Health Plan detailing the procedure for 'drying off' cows with your veterinary surgeon.

Does this cow need antibiotic dry cow therapy? **NO** Dry off cow using the protocol outlined in your Herd Health Plan.

YES
Are you drying off the correct cow? **NO** Separate and mark the correct cows and dry them off after milking.

YES
Does the withdrawal time of the tube match the likely dry period length? **NO** Consult your vet.

YES
Have you identified all dry cows after treating them with antibiotics? **NO** Use at least 2 methods of identification that will last the whole dry period e.g. tail tape, leg tape, leg band.

YES
Have you recorded the treatment? **NO** Record date, product, batch number, cow ID and withdrawal period end date.

YES
Check your records to ensure you know when the milk can go back in the tank. Do you know this date? **NO** Read the manufacturer's recommendations and make a note of the earliest date milk can go back in the tank. Bear in mind the statutory 96-hour post-calving withdrawal.

YES
Are the dry cows kept separate from the milking cows, even when the herd is grazing? **NO** Keep dry cows separate to reduce accidental milking and to provide for their general and nutritional management separately to the milking group.

YES
Always observe the full withdrawal period of the dry cow product, irrespective of when the cow calves; it is good practice to test milk before putting it in the bulk tank. Remember, bought-in cows and heifers may have been treated without your knowledge.