



Winter Teat Dipping - What's the best approach in extreme cold?

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In winters with days of extreme cold weather, such as this current winter, many dairy farms consider different post milking teat dips in an effort to prevent frostbite on the teat ends. However, not all approaches are equal, and many may even put your cows at a higher risk of intramammary infections.

The first step is to determine if a change is even necessary. Are you cows exposed to the extreme weather (temperatures below 0°F with wind chill) within 20 minutes of exiting the parlor? Are they protected from the wind? Can you keep the cows in the barn longer before allowing them access to exercise yards or pastures? If you have a free stall, are the curtains all the way up and doors closed to reduce wind and allow the air to warm with the cow's body heat? If your facilities are set up where the cows are not able to be protected from the wind and extreme cold for at least 20-30 minutes after milking, then a change in how to manage post dipping may be appropriate.

Currently the practice for these extreme temperatures most highly recommended is to continue to use your current post dip, but blot the end of the teat gently to remove any excess dip which would take longer to dry and be more prone to freezing. Winter teat dips may have higher glycerin levels to help with teat condition and reduce cracking and would take longer to freeze on the teat skin. However, barrier dips are not recommended as they have the longest drying time, increasing the risk of the dip freezing on the teat end.

Some farms may consider the use of a powdered teat dip so that there would be no liquid dip on the teat skin to potentially freeze. Research into powdered dips showed that these products do not

have the same germicidal activity against contagious (specifically *Staph aureus*) and environmental pathogens when compared to regular teat dip. They were deemed insufficient to reduce the risk of new intramammary infections (Goldberg, 1994). No research specifically into the germicidal activity of the active ingredient of powdered teat dips, Chlorhexidine, could be found.

The approach that is specifically not recommended is the use of salves, as the potential for contamination which may overcome the germicidal property of the product! It can also increase the risk of spreading contagious forms of mastitis! These thick products can also trap infection and cause environmental dirt to stick to the udder in greater numbers.

The least desirable solution to the winter dipping conundrum is to stop dipping all together. Teat dip is important to prevent bacteria left on the skin after milking and environmental bacteria from gaining access to the teat end and entering the udder. Please continue to apply post dip after milking in order to help prevent new infections. Work closely with your veterinarian, Quality Milk or your dip supplier to ensure that the product you are using has been proven to effective and is appropriate for your facility design.

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