

## Bulk tank SCC – is it one cow or my whole herd.

In today's dairy market striving for the highest milk quality tier helps the milk check and in turn pays the bills. As a producer starts to evaluate milk quality and set goals, it's important to start at square one. Where are we and what are our goals? Do we have a goal that was forgotten about?

Milk quality goals must be defined – who is going to create them? It's important that they are created by management with the input from milker's and the barn crew. This step allows for buy-in from employees. They feel valued and can provide some feedback as to current challenges that they are observing.

### Goals must be defined by management

- With input from milkers and barn crew
- Clearly defined and measurable
- Defined, implemented, carried out, evaluated/analyzed

### Goals reflect management's priorities

- Establishing well defined Key Performance Indicators

### Make goals realistic

- Do not make the initial goal, the dream
- Recognize accomplishments along the way

Goals must reflect management priorities, provide steps (an action plan) and details of what will be evaluated (performance indicators). They should also include a timeline and be realistic. If you currently have a SCC of 400,000 it's not realistic to say our goal is to have a SCC of < 100,000 within one month.

### Steps to goal setting

1. Where are we today? When talking about milk quality we want to talk about:
  - a. Bulk tank SCC
  - b. Bacteria count
  - c. Cases of new mastitis each month (clinical)
  - d. New high SCC cows each month.
  - e. Number of chronic mastitis cows
2. Once you know where you are today you can create your goals. One goal could be to have a bulk tank SCC of < 125,000 and maintain that goals. Another goal could be to have < 2% clinical mastitis cases/month. Base the goals on where you are today, and where you want to be.
3. Identify opportunities – what could be some of our challenges and how can we address them? When it comes to milk quality we have 4 focus areas:
  - a. The Cow
  - b. The Environment
  - c. The Equipment
  - d. The Milking Routine
4. Once we have identified our opportunity(s), it's time to come up with a game plan. What are we going to do differently? Maybe we identified our milking routine (or lack of routine) as being a challenge. We can create a protocol, do some employee training and launch a new milking protocol that everyone follows.

Where are we today?

What is our goal?

Identify opportunity

Implement plan of action

How are we going to monitor progress?

What is our timeline

5. Monitor progress – how are we going to evaluate if our changes are making things better or worse? What parameters are we going to evaluate and how often? Make this very clear. It's also important to monitor individual changes, so that we know what management practices help us, and which ones might not bring as much value to the table.
6. Set a timeline and be accountable. Put names and dates on paper.
  - a. Who is responsible for evaluating opportunities areas and creating an action plan?
  - b. When does this need to be completed?
  - c. Who is doing employee training, if needed?
  - d. Who is monitoring the goal and **sharing** progress along the way?
    - i. This is a key step. Are things going in the right direction?
    - ii. Post in the breakroom, or on a parlor white board what the goal is, and where you are today.

Your action plan can be as detailed as you want it to be, but should include all key pieces and dates. You can add names and deadline to specific action items, include dates of goal reviews, or any other information.

**EX: ACTION PLAN**

1. Where are you today? Bulk tank SCC 250,000
2. What is your goal? Bulk tank SCC <150,000
3. Identify opportunities
  1. No milking routine – everybody does something different.
4. What is the game plan?
  1. Work with QMPS to develop a milking routine that fits our needs.
  2. Hold employee trainings so that everyone is following the same routine.
5. Evaluation
  1. After employee training, all employees will be routinely evaluated either in person or via video monitoring. Re-training will occur as needed.
6. Timeline
  1. New milking protocol will be developed by April 1<sup>st</sup>.
  2. Employee training will be completed by April 5<sup>th</sup>.
  3. Reach SCC goal by June 1<sup>st</sup> and maintain through the next 6 months.
7. Reward
  1. Pizza and wings once milking routine is consistent
  2. \$100 cash bonus each month the SCC is <125,000