



Lower cell count benefits bottom line

By Mark Blackwell, DairyNZ – SmartSAMM

A good first step to mastitis control involves benchmarking your herd's mastitis performance then setting realistic goals.

What it's worth to have low cell counts

By using the SmartSAMM gap calculator at www.dairyNZ.co.nz/smartsamm, you can estimate the dollar value of reducing your average bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC).

For instance, if a supplier halves their season average BMSCC from 300,000 to 150,000 cells/ml, the milksolids gain would be 2.1% of total season milksolids, or \$15,750 at a milk price of \$7.50, per 100,000 kgMS.

That's equivalent to an extra 15.7 cents/kgMS milk income across total production, or an extra four or five days of peak milk production. Further benefits are fewer clinical cases, and a longer lactation for more cows.

BMSCC as a performance indicator

Daily variability means short-term trends and patterns can be hard to pick. In the following chart of the Fonterra milk supply base, records are ranked by monthly percentiles, forming parallel curves from calving to dry-off. Curves start higher at calving, bottom out during peak, and double in late lactation.

To compare your herd, go to Fencepost at www.fonterra.com, select 'Production Reports' and then select 'SCC' from the 'Measure' drop down.

What should herds with higher BMSCC be aiming for?

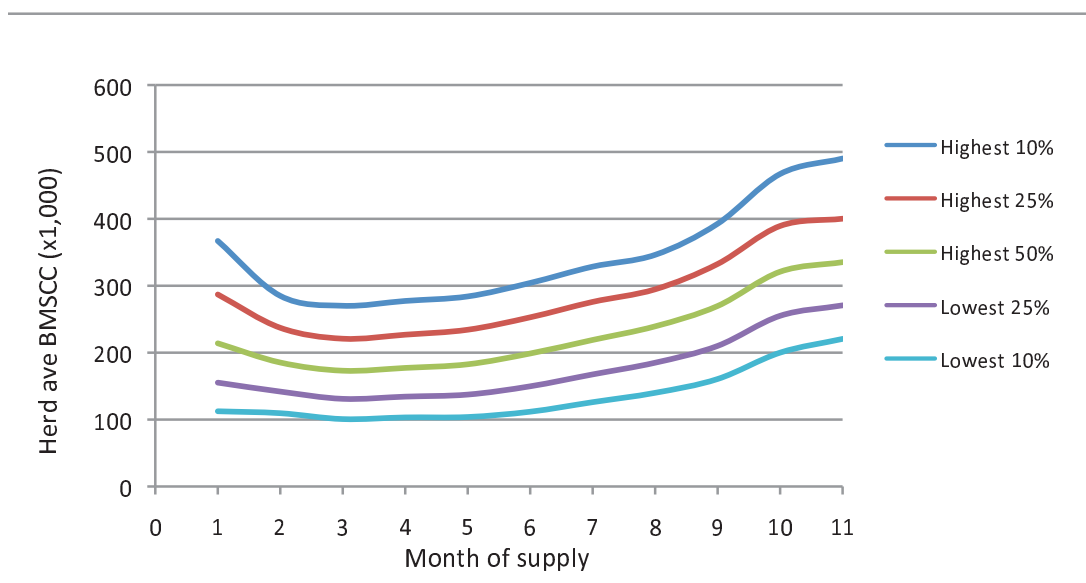
Research shows that farmers know what they are trying to achieve, but most report they don't meet their own "self-set goals".

Tanker dockets or Fencepost alerts signal the need for mastitis control when cell count increases, or when it approaches an "unacceptable limit". These self-determined limits vary amongst farmers. Some are happy "close to 350,000" while others "get concerned when over 150,000".

Any supplier with a BMSCC that's higher than the "middle 50%" should review their self-set limits and consider adopting:

- The lowest 25% curve as a realistic and achievable target. One in four suppliers already achieves that.
- The middle 50% curve as a trigger. If you exceed this trigger, take action to bring BMSCC back down to target level.

Acknowledgements: Fonterra Food Safety @ Sustainable Production, Cognosco.



To become more effective at preventing, finding and treating mastitis, refer to the copy of Healthy Udder that you received with your October DairyNZ *Inside Dairy* pack. For more information about Fonterra's mastitis resources and support services, visit [Tools & Resources > Somatic Cell Count & Mastitis at Fencepost](#).