



Fix A Milk Quality Problem Quickly: A Smart Strategy

June 15, 2021

Le Producteur de Lait Québécois Magazine

Acting quickly when a milk quality problem arises is both a productive and profitable approach. A quality advisor can help you define the issue more clearly. Stéphane, who owns Ferme Barsalou, shares his experience here.



Quality Is A Priority

Stéphane represents the fifth generation of the Barsalou family to operate Ferme Barsalou et Fils SENC, a farm established in 1871, in Sainte-Sabine, in the Montérégie area. Composed mainly of Holsteins, the herd fills a 47-kg quota.

Stéphane is a visionary who always has a project on the go. He is constantly developing his operation and continues to increase his quota every month. He has four children to whom he hopes to pass on his passion for dairy farming, so they, in turn, can take over the farm. He remains open to a non-family transfer, however, depending on what the future holds. His main objective is to run a profitable business, and he believes that producing top quality milk is the way to do that. Stéphane is a proactive producer who takes pride in working hard to ship good quality milk day after day, with an average SCC of 100 000 and a bacterial count of 8 000. Accordingly, his farm is able to take advantage of all the milk quality premiums available, which amount to over \$3000 a year.

High Bacterial Count

On October 26, 2020, Stéphane noted that the bacterial levels in his milk had increased considerably. While his monthly average was usually below 10 000 CBI/ml, the result for that pickup was 170 000 CBI/ ml. He quickly called on the milk quality advisor in his region, Caroline Martel, an agronomist who had also been a dairy producer herself for many years.

On-Farm Intervention

Caroline conducted a series of wash system tests for the pipeline and milking units. The results revealed a leak in the wash sink that needed to be repaired or replaced in short order. In addition to soap and acid losses, the leak also caused a significant loss of heat during wash cycles, so the system was no longer washing effectively. Caroline also noted that the bulk tank was not being cleaned thoroughly. In this case, a defective wash pump was the cause, with the water pressure being too low to wash the tank properly. Those issues were dealt with promptly, and milk bacteria counts immediately stabilized at an acceptable level.

Quick And Cost-Effective Decision Making

Stéphane wants to share this message with other producers who are as passionate and conscientious as he is:

“Don’t be afraid to surround yourself with professionals in the dairy sector or be ashamed to ask for help. It’s especially important to take action before the problems pile up or the situation deteriorates. You need to know how to surround yourself with qualified advisors and service providers that you can count on for support in all areas of dairy management, to help you become more efficient and quickly identify solutions to your problems.”

“If you solve the problems quickly, the wheel stops turning. But if you wait too long, there’s a snowball effect, and the initial problems generate new ones. It doesn’t take long to get discouraged. In this case, because I acted rapidly, I was able to get my quality premiums back the following month, which proved very profitable for my farm,” he adds.

We are fortunate to have a collective marketing system for our milk in Quebec, so individual producers don’t have to negotiate with the processors, as is the case in the US. The testing program ensures that all producers meet the required standards. Thus the responsibility of shipping top quality milk is shared and assumed by all producers.

If you would like to find out more about how to improve milk quality on your farm, visit the “[Milk Production and Quality](#)” section, or consult your advisor.

A TO-DO LIST TO ENSURE MILK QUALITY:

1. Check the alarms on the thermograph (milk temperature, wash temperature and duration)
2. Check that the correct amounts of washing products are being used
3. Remember to clean the radiator monthly
4. Check that the air injector is functioning properly
5. Do a visual check after every wash to make sure the inside of the bulk tank is clean
6. Ensure that milking equipment is clean at all times

Milk Quality Advisor in Quebec

- **ROLE OF THE MILK QUALITY ADVISOR**

The milk quality advisor acts as an industry resource person by contributing to improving the quality of milk produced in Quebec. The

milk quality advisor intervenes in cases of bacteria and somatic cell penalties, or when producers need support to improve milk quality. The quality advisor interprets the data and milk recording reports, prepares an action plan with producers and provides follow-up support. Don't hesitate to take advantage of your advisor's expertise! Some of these services are subsidized, so cost-free under certain conditions.

- HOW TO CONTACT YOUR MILK QUALITY ADVISOR

Getting support from a milk quality advisor is as easy as 1-2-3!

There are two ways you can get in touch:

- Contact your regional secretary
- Contact [Lactanet's customer service](#)



By Isabelle Morin, D.M.V., Cert. LAM

Isabelle is a Dairy Herd Health Coordinator at Lactanet and is also a passionate author and speaker. Over the years, she has acquired a solid experience in biosecurity, being involved in the Salmonella dublin file and in the Bovine Animal Health Alert and Information Network (RAIZO).

Caroline Martel, agronomist, Milk Quality Advisor, Lactanet