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# Protocol for farms with udder health problems

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The Animal Health Service in The Netherlands employs certified specialists in the field of mastitis management, especially trained in the evaluation of the functioning of the milking machine and milking procedures. They visit, on a yearly basis, around 300 dairy farms with mastitis or problems related to the milking machine at the request of the farmer and/or local veterinary practitioner. They report their findings always to the farmer and the local veterinarian.

In this article the protocol for farms with udder health problems will be discussed.

Both for the farmer and the adviser it is important to set a goal at the start of the visit. It should be clear what udder health status the farmer wants to achieve and in which period. Examples of goals are:

Bulk milk cell count	< 250.000 c/ml
Number of cows > 250.000 c/ml	< 15% of the herd
Number new cows > 250.000 c/ml	< 10% of the herd
Clinical mastitis cases	< 20 cases per 100 cows
Number of culled cows for udder health problems	< 5%

A good analysis of farm data, the farm management and the cows is essential for a good advice.

A farm visit starts with the analysis of farm data related to mastitis such as milk recording data, cow SCC data, results of bacteriological culture, test report of the milking machine, data on milk quality control and the ration of the cows. Important in the analysis of farm data is information about new infections. Which cows got new infections and in which period? What is the most important pathogen?

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## Introduction

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## Setting the goal

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## Analysis

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The data analysis is followed by a farm inspection. Important points are the hygiene of the lying areas and the bedding, the ventilation and the feeding regime. To get more information about the feeding regime the cow condition, the rumen filling, the rumen mobility and the consistency of cow manure is observed. During milking measurements on the milking machine are carried out and the milking procedures are supervised. The behaviour of the cows, the milking results and the teat condition are judged. The farmer is questioned about preventive measurements, treatment and culling of mastitis cows. Important in the analysis of the farm management is if there were any vital management changes before the outbreak of mastitis.

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**Advice and  
follow-up**

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After the analysis of the farm data, the farm management and the herd, it is possible to tackle the problem. The advice is always twofold: a way to tackle the mastitis cows and a way to tackle the risk factors on the farm. With the cow SCC data, the results of bacteriological culture and the milk recording data for every mastitis cow, the adviser can decide together with the farmer and the local veterinarian about treatment, (early) drying off or culling. Furthermore, the risk factors on the farms are eliminated as much as possible. The advice will be differentiated in short-term and long-term advices. The results of the advice are evaluated on a regular bases by the local veterinarian and, if necessary, corrections are made.