

## A Common but Costly Disease

MASTITIS Q&A WITH DR. RODRIGO SOUZA, SENIOR TECHNICAL SERVICES MANAGER, PHIBRO ANIMAL HEALTH CORPORATION

**Most dairy producers are all too familiar with mastitis, a common disease caused by inflammation of a dairy cow's mammary gland. The inflammation is triggered by the animal's immune response to a bacterial infection in the teat canal, or to other bacterial, chemical or heat injuries to the udder. One case of mastitis can cost a producer an average of \$326 per cow<sup>1</sup>, so it's imperative to know the cause, signs and management tools for dairy cow mastitis to help the health of your herd — and your bottom line.**

**As a Senior Technical Services Manager for Phibro Animal Health Corporation, Dr. Rodrigo Souza supports producers, nutritionists and veterinarians, helping them to better recognize and manage mastitis. He answers some frequently asked questions about this costly disease.**

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### Managing Mastitis: Rodrigo Souza Answers Common Questions

#### **Q: How big of a problem is mastitis?**

A. Mastitis is one of the dairy industry's most costly diseases, with repercussions affecting the animal, producer and end user. Mastitis is an inflammation of the mammary gland resulting from a bacterial invasion or an udder injury, which can become painful for the cow if left untreated. Treatment of mastitis is one of the most common reasons that antimicrobials are administered to dairy cows.

The disease can take a significant toll on a producer's bottom line in many ways, such as the costs associated with diagnostics, treatment, discarded milk, decreased value of milk, extra labor, reproductive loss, reduced cow sale value and premature culling. Mastitis can also cause changes in milk composition and reduce shelf life of the product.

#### **Q: What actions should producers take to try to keep mastitis from affecting their herds?**

A. Not all cows show symptoms of subclinical mastitis, so producers will want to monitor and record the somatic cell count (SCC) of their herd for an early indication of the issue. Elevated SCC is often a sign that pathogens are present, which can lead to

mastitis if left untreated. A higher SCC is associated with lower milk production and poorer milk quality. Management practices also play a key role in mastitis prevention. It's imperative that producers always use proper milking procedures and reduce stressors that can take a toll on a cow's immunity, because a strong immune system is an essential part of the defense against mastitis-causing pathogens and the development of other diseases. Don't underestimate the importance of providing a clean, dry environment for your dairy cows.

#### **Q: Once mastitis occurs, how can it be managed?**

A. While ideal protocols vary from farm to farm, cows exhibiting signs of mastitis should generally be isolated from the rest of the herd. Early treatment can also help get mastitis under control and specific mastitis therapies should be based on severity and any details known about the bacteria strain. A milk culture can help identify the pathogen. Producers should always follow label instructions for an intramammary tube, and when several clinical signs are present, a systematic antibiotic should be a part of the therapy. Unfortunately, it may be necessary to cull cows with chronic mastitis.

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**Q: How does Phibro help producers identify and manage mastitis?**

A. Since early identification can be key to successful treatment, it's important to keep an eye on management practices and environmental factors. The Phibro Stress Assessment is a great tool for helping producers spot potential issues that they may not see in their day-to-day operations. A strong immune system is an essential part of the defense against mastitis, and by feeding OmniGen® nutritional specialty product, producers can help their cows maintain a healthy immune system, which

enhances their ability to withstand infection. Finally, producers, veterinarians and nutritionists alike will want to check out the **“Dairy’s Most Profit-Draining Challenges: Mastitis”** webinar, free on [Phibro Academy](#). In the webinar they’ll learn many more identification, prevention and management tips from Dr. Souza and from Dr. Daniela Bruno, D.V.M., Ph.D., from University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

**To learn more about how you can help identify and manage mastitis, contact your local dairy advisor or visit [www.theOmniGenDifference.com](http://www.theOmniGenDifference.com)**

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<sup>1</sup> Nickerson et al., 2013. PAHC Reference OGO10413. Available upon request.