

# MANAGING SCC IN EARLY LACTATION



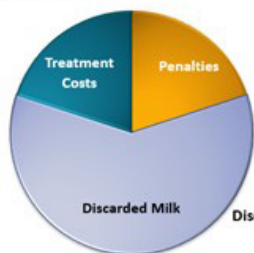
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Elevated Somatic Cell Count (SCC) is a hidden cost on Irish dairy farms. Unless a clinical case of mastitis is seen and treated, raised SCC levels are rarely acted upon.

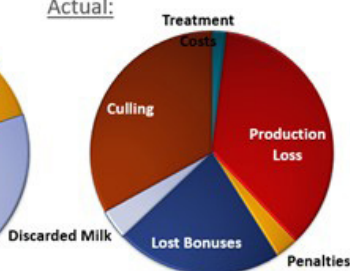
Costs of high SCC levels are totally underestimated on Irish farms and can vary from €250-€350 per case. This figure comes from sub-clinical costs such as milk quality penalties, the loss of milk production along with clinical costs. Clinical costs would include antibiotics, discarded milk, labour, veterinary and culling.

## What does mastitis cost us?

Perceived:



Actual:



## MILK PRODUCTION LOSSES

**Estimated milk production loss per cow  
Assuming 0 production loss at <100,000**

SCC category	Litres/lactation
50-100	0
100-200	-174
200-300	-309
300-400	-367
>400	-422

Source: Paddy Kelly PhD Thesis

## COST OF A SLIGHTLY HIGH SOMATIC CELL COUNT (SCC)

**The CellCheck programme has a nice tool to calculate what SCC is costing you. This is based on production losses due to infection in the cow, treatment costs, discarding milk to keep out treated milk, veterinary costs, diagnostic testing, culling and penalties.**



<https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/cellcheck/costcheck-economic-calculator/>

Maintaining a SCC below 200,000 for the next few months requires information on individual cows, identify the high cows and stop them spreading infection to clean cows.

### Approach:

- Milk record or individually SCC all cows in the herd in the next few weeks. You must SCC the whole herd, it will surprise you the cows that maybe high.
- Once high cows have been identified, feed this milk to male calves for sale, while helping to lower bulk tank SCC.
- Milk these cows last or dip the clusters in peracetic acid before applying to the next cow. You will see a stabilising in your bulk tank and less fluctuating of bulk tank SCC. If you have a drafting gate, why not auto draft them to milk last, this avoids any dipping and all their milk can be collected for calves.
- These high cows should be culled if they have been problem cows the previous lactation, especially if you have surplus numbers. If a dry cow tube has not cured these cows, they are chronic and need to be culled. Act now, with the restrictions in antibiotic use i.e. selective dry cow, you need to start taking control from the start. If you are sitting between 200 and 300,000 SCC small changes can make a big difference if you act now. Gloves, post dip, lime twice per day, service milking parlour, milk record and disinfect clusters after problem cows, these are the building blocks to a low SCC.