

400K Beat It! Program Uses a Team Approach to Improve Milk Quality

Dairy One and Quality Milk Production Services have created a service package that provides a short-term--but intensive--boost to your milk quality management. The program, *400K Beat It!*, is short-term in the sense that we will work with farms individually each month over a 6-month timeframe, but is long-term since our intention is to build a process by which the farm can manage and monitor SCC into the future.

Identifying the factors that are impacting milk quality involves evaluating several aspects of the dairy operation. It can be difficult to isolate these factors and to develop appropriate monitoring tools without information and the experience of people who are working across many farms.

Milking procedure, milking equipment, cow housing, bedding, consistency of the herd staff, dry cow programs, and nutritional programs are just some of the areas that need to be investigated before a good, whole farm program can be developed.

Forming a milk quality team that supports and works with you to reach your milk quality goals is a positive first step. The team members are those advisors you work with and trust. For example, you might invite your Dairy One market manager or technician, milk inspector (CMI), herd veterinarian, and/or regional QMPS veterinarian to participate. One member will work as a facilitator, keeping everyone informed as new data is available, while other members will participate in setting goals, management changes, and monitoring progress during the program.

Below is a graph featuring a case study herd where a team approach was used to improve SCC. It shows the bulk tank SCC for each tank for a one-year period. The oldest data is on the left, and most recent data is on the right. The broken line is at the 400K level, and timing for each meeting is indicated.

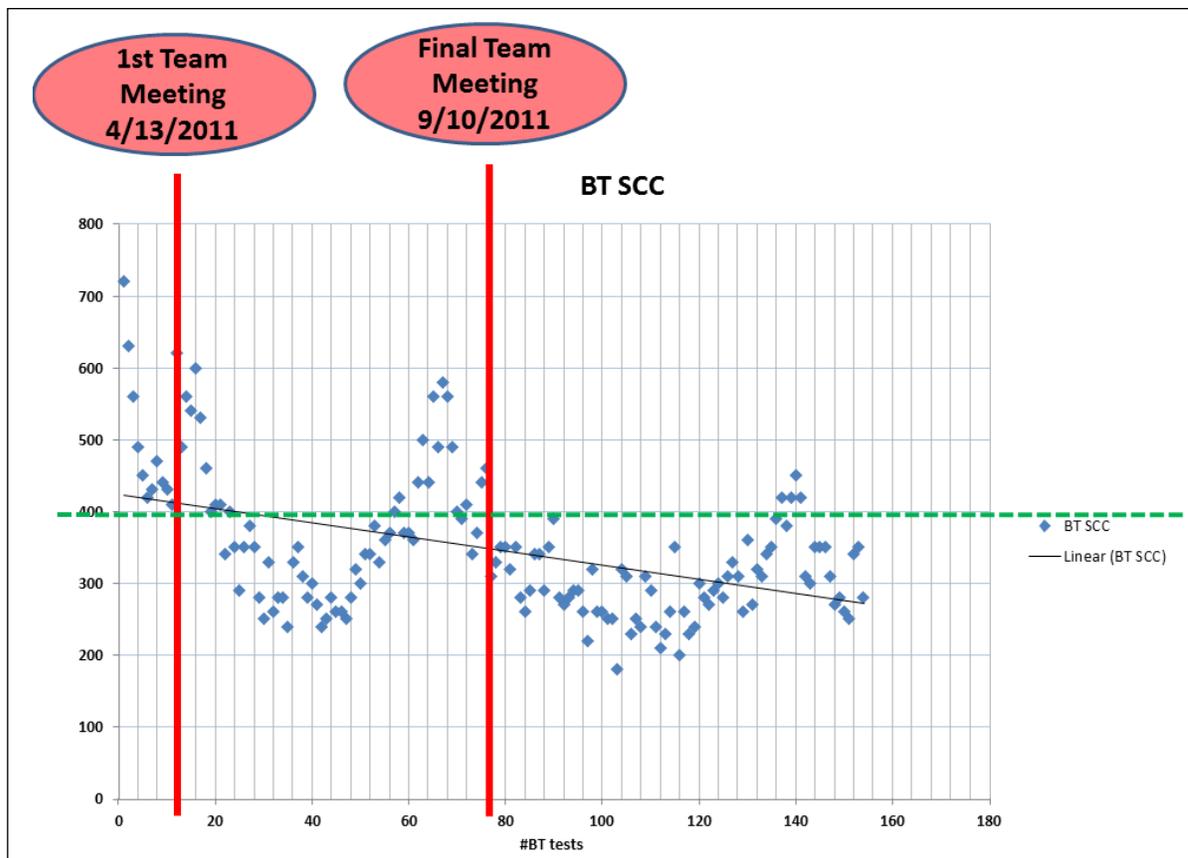
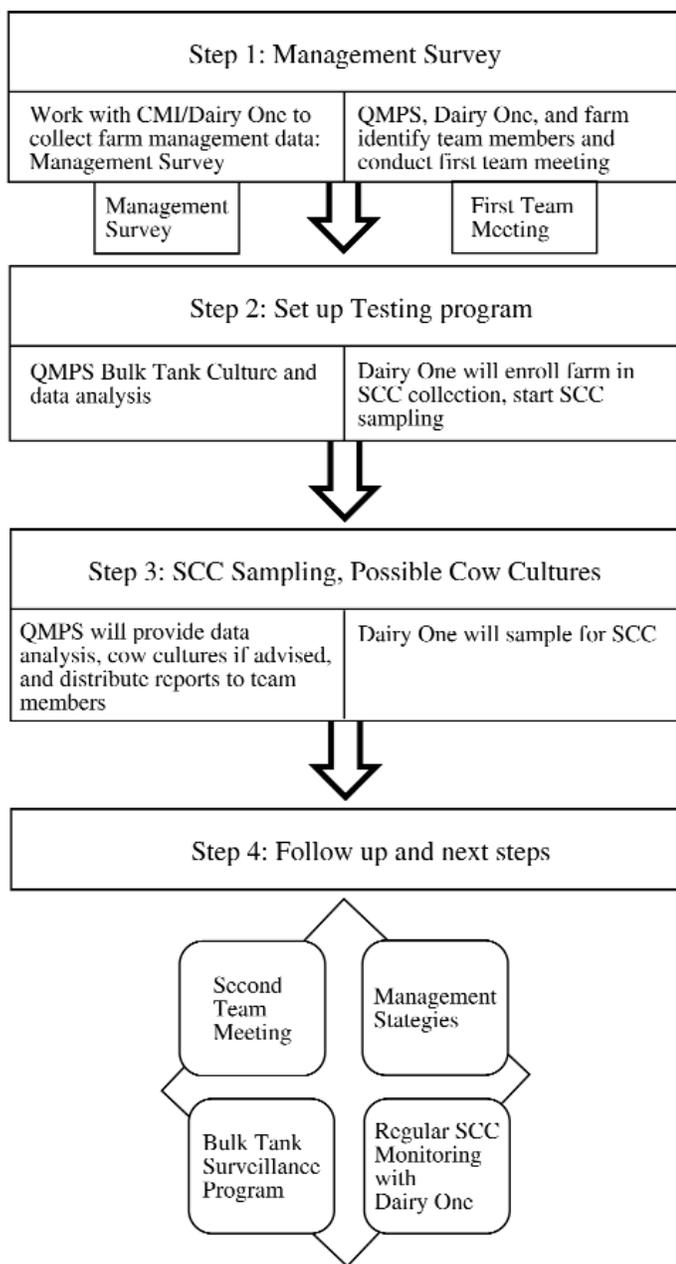


Figure 1: *400K Beat It!* case study

This bulk tank SCC case study indicates the following:

1. The cost of the *400 Beat It!* program is an investment in udder health and milk quality.
2. The *400 Beat It!* program is a process, not an event, and functions better as time goes on.
3. Using teams is a powerful management strategy. Significant improvements are evident when teams meet and work for a common cause.
4. We are seeing success in achieving our goal of improved bulk tank SCC.

How the *400K Beat It!* program works:



Step #1: Complete a “Management Survey” or short risk assessment of your farm situation. The team will review and discuss the information, and come up with a plan to work on the identified priorities. In many cases, it is most efficient and cost effective to conduct this team meeting by conference call.

Step #2: Set up the testing program for your farm. The testing program will include a 6-month bulk milk monitoring program and 6 months of individual cow production and cell-count tests.

Step #3: Collect and interpret all the data. Before the team can suggest improvements, it is key to measure precisely what is happening in the herd: if you don't measure it, you can't manage it. QMPS veterinarians will analyze each month's collected data with bulk tank cultures. They will look at the major bacteria causing SCC problems, and they will review cow-level SCC to identify dynamics of infections in the herd. Reports and recommendations for strategies to lower bulk tank SCC will be sent back to the dairy and distributed to the team.

Step #4: The final step consists of another team meeting. The team will review all the data and decide on the necessary steps to ensure continued production of high-quality milk. The combination of monthly test-day information combined with regular team reporting on the results may be a process that continues in your day-to-day management. Sharing information during the 6-month duration of the program can provide the foundation for a process used by the dairy going forward.

Teams are an integral part of the program because reducing SCC takes teamwork. The path to progress is not always easy to find, particularly while steeped in day-to-day management of the farm. With the *400K Beat It!* program, we help you by developing a short-term, very focused program. Through the program, you receive the guidance and support of your professional milk quality team, as well as the data and monitoring solutions necessary to maximize milk quality. The return on investment will be evident in a very short time because it is two-fold: increased milk quality premiums and increased milk production. For producers who

are consistently below 400K, we can explore a similar approach through our *200K Get It!* program.

For more information about the program, contact Randy Perkins, Marketing and Sales Director by phone at 607-227-6528 or by e-mail at randy.perkins@dairyone.com.

New EU Agreement Drives Milk Quality Focus

Access to international markets is an important area of growth for U.S. dairy producers. Participating in this global market means meeting the recently adopted European Union -USDA marketing agreement (EC 853/2004 regulation) milk quality standards. Having a new regulatory requirement has naturally led the industry toward focusing on achieving and maintaining somatic cell counts below the 400k limit.

In April, producers began seeing calculated values of their rolling 3 month SCC mean, which indicates whether or not they are below the required limit.

A simple way to think about the complicated system that the EU has put in place is to look at cows in a herd that are infected. They are either infected or not, based on their SCC. Cows with higher SCC than others that are over the infection threshold (200,000) simply contribute to the bulk tank at different rates, based on their production and SCC. They are not "more infected". That said, once a producer reaches a geometric mean over 400,000, they are out of compliance, and it doesn't matter by how much. To make the calculation a bit easier, simply take the product of the three months averages; if below 64 million, you are fine. For instance, a herd with 3 consecutive months at 400K average SCC would have a product of 64 million, since $400K \times 400K \times 400K = 64,000,000$.

Producers below the limit will benefit from evaluating their SCC maintenance and monitoring options, while those above need options to help reduce overall cell counts while maintaining compatibility with the management of their farm business.