How to avoid antibiotic residue contamination in milk bulk tanks

Here are nine common missteps that can contaminate your bulk tank with antibiotic residues. Learn our tips and recommendations for avoiding each one.

1. Antibiotic-treated cows are milked before untreated cows.

   Always milk treated cows last, and sanitize the milking unit between each milking.

2. One quarter of the udder is treated and the milk is withheld from the tank, but milk from the other three quarters is not withheld.

   Always discard milk from all four quarters of a treated cow.

3. A treated cow is mistaken for an untreated cow, and the milk is routed to the main pipeline.

   Establish a treated-cow identification protocol: Before treatment, apply at least two different visual identification methods, such as leg bands, chalk marks, tail tape, or neck chains. Identification should be secure but easily removed when the drug withholding time has expired.

4. A treated cow during dry-off is unintentionally milked, and the milk is routed to the bulk tank.

   Segregate treated dry cows from lactating cows, preferably in a separate facility.

5. All treated cows are milked last, as they should be, but the milk line is not diverted from the bulk tank.

   Develop a protocol to help ensure milk is diverted.
   1. Hang a treated cow list on the bulk tank swing line. The list should include instructions to remove the swing line before milking treated animals.
   2. After milking untreated cows, remove the milking units and prepare them for the treated animals.
   3. Pull the swing line out of the bulk tank, and use the treated cow list to cross-check that all treated animals have been withheld from the bulk tank.
Avoiding these common missteps can help you deliver safe, wholesome foods for the consumer.

For more information, contact your IDEXX representative.