

## Checking for teat damage

Teat damage refers to teat sores or teat end damage, and it is a major cause of mastitis. It is usually caused by faulty milking machinery, over-milking, exposure to mud and water, or injuries. Teat damage can make milking a painful process for cows, and steps should be taken to prevent it, but if it is present it should be treated. Animal welfare considerations mean that it is important that teat health is monitored and any issues resolved.

Visually checking teats during milking will alert you to any problems. Although it is not always practical to check teats when clusters come off, many conditions will be more obvious at this stage.

If poor teat health is a persistent problem in your herd it is important to identify the causes and rectify them. Iodine based teat sprays or creams are the most effective for teat scabs and cracks. However, for more in depth information on prevention and treatment of teat damage consult with your local veterinarian and your milking machine company.

### **Benefits**



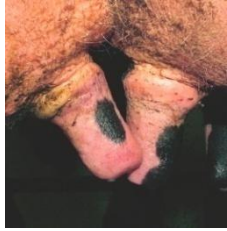



#### **Assist in correctly identifying the cause of teat damage**

- so that the problem can be rectified.

#### **Reduce the incidence of mastitis**

#### **Ensure animal welfare is maintained and reduce pain induced behavioural issues**

## 1.1 Common presentations of teat damage and their causes

Check teats for		Possible causes
Teat sores		Exposure to mud and water and / or faulty machinery.
Blueing of teat end		Defective pulsation, excessive vacuum, or incompatible liner / shell combinations.
Horizontal rings		Defective pulsation, excessive vacuum, or incompatible liner / shell combinations.
Swelling of teat end		Defective pulsation, excessive vacuum, or incompatible liner / shell combinations.
Pulled out teat end		Persistent high vacuum, faulty pulsation and / or persistent over-milking.
Teat orifice damage (hyperkeratosis)		Persistent high vacuum, faulty pulsation and / or persistent over-milking. May be aggravated by insufficient emollient in teat spray.

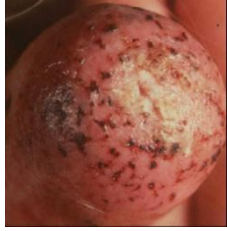


Pin point bleeding		Poor machine function and suboptimal pulsation.
Black scabs (Black spot)		Faulty milking machinery causing the teat orifice to prolapse and become ulcerated.
Cracked teats		Lack of emollient in teat spray.

Figure 1. Common presentations of teat damage and their possible causes.

Source: Livestock Improvement Ltd. 2001. Managing mastitis. A practical guide for New Zealand dairy farmers.

### Action points

- ✓ Ensure milking machinery is completely checked at least once every 12 months. Make sure the tester you use holds a current practicing certificate from the MPTA. Request a “wet” or dynamic test at milking time, if the cause of teat damage persists or is proving difficult to identify.
- ✓ Replace all components of the milking machinery as per manufacturer’s recommendations. Record maintenance and component replacement dates of all milking machinery.
- ✓ Be aware of over-milking in the herd. Clusters should be removed when there is less than 100 ml of milk in any quarter - there should be minimal milk flow in the sight bowl. Fresh cows, young cows with small teats, and cows on test buckets are especially susceptible to teat injury through over-milking.
- ✓ Ensure the milking machine vacuum level is set according to MPTA guidelines.