

Post Milking Teat Sanitation
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The discussion of whether “To Dip or Not to Dip” becomes more heated when the weather gets cold. The influx of new products and the suggestion of different strategies have created uncertainties about the best practices. Due to the many variables present in real life situations, no single answer concerning post-milking sanitation is adequate for all circumstances. I would like to make the following suggestions.

Use the same good germicide and skin conditioning dip you’ve been using throughout the year. The effectiveness of the germicide at your dairy is very important and not all products contain the same germicide. Most days, it’s not cold enough to freeze the drop on the teat end. When there are cold wind chills and/or direct exposure post milking, dab or wick the drop off with a cloth towel. Do not dry the whole teat as this action removes the dip /skin conditioners from teat. Do not add extra conditioners to the dip because the formulation will become altered.

What about barrier dips? I do not recommend barrier dips in very cold weather and direct wind chill exposure situations post milking because of the long time (up to 20 or more minutes) to dry; thus, increasing risks for teat end problems.

What about the winter formulation dips, high emollients dips and/or powder dips? They are designed to use only during cold weather and in high-risk situations where teats will freeze or dehydrate quickly. Although they may cost 2-3 times that of your regular dip, the potential returns may support the increased initial investment. High emollient dips contain more than 50% skin conditioners. They minimize initial freezing risk post milking due to slow evaporation and they have shown some benefit in controlled studies. The dip should contain a proven germicide because the teats may stay wetter and oily longer. Powder based dips keep teats dry because there is no liquid. New formulations have germicide and skin conditioners.

What about salves? Salves result in greasy hands, greasy teats, and greasy equipment. This sticky mess can trap ongoing infections and attract dirt that will adhere to the teat. Research shows minimal or no effect (some detrimental) when compared to more fluid salves. If you decide to use, use sparingly and only on the teat end.

What about quitting dipping and doing nothing else? Please don't! Teats are still wet after milking, teat skin conditioners are milked off and the teats are at an increased risk of dehydration and cracking.

It’s a sure thing that teat end problems will occur in the cold or changing weather. Develop the protocol and use the product that best suits your situation while continuing management strategies that minimize direct wind exposure post milking, keep dry stalls clean to prevent chilling and organism growth, and follow proper milking procedures that minimize other teat stressors.