



HerdHQ Case Study:

The Chronic Cow Driving Up Bulk Tank SCC

This case study is based on real DRMS testing data and herd-level outcomes from a Midwest herd. While the farm is not identified, the scenario reflects actual analysis and results, showing how HerdHQ tools like MilkMetrics and HotSheetPro can surface key improvement areas and support confident, data-driven decisions.

Background

A 1,100-cow herd in the Midwest didn't have a severe somatic cell count (SCC) problem, but wanted to stay ahead of issues and protect their milk quality premiums.

The Problem

- Situation: SCC was consistently above 200,000 and creeping close to 300,000
- Challenge: Catching SCC spikes early and identifying chronic offenders that were driving repeated infections and costly milk losses.



The Solution

With HerdHQ®, the team used alerts, benchmarking and cow-level tools to quickly isolate problems.

- **MilkMetrics®** peer comparison revealed the herd ranked in the bottom 15% for SCC (average 207,000) among Midwest herds of 750–3,000 cows.
- Custom alerts were set:
 - ◊ SCC >200,000 and bottom 20% SCC ranking
 - ◊ % infected >20% and bottom 10% ranking
- Once alerts were triggered, the team used **HotSheetPro** to quickly identify top contributors.
 - ◊ Just 4 cows were responsible for nearly 12% of the cells in the tank — and together were producing 495 lbs. of milk per day.
 - ◊ After removing those problem cows, bulk tank SCC immediately dropped below 200,000
- Then they dug deeper with **CowCompass®** to assess infection history.
 - ◊ Two cows were flagged as New Fresh Infections — monitored closely, treated if needed, and placed on a “short leash” for improvement. If they did not improve in production, they would be culled.
 - ◊ Two cows were identified as chronic cases. One cow had a current SCC of nearly 6 million and >2 million average this lactation and last. She was 157 DIM and well below herd mates in production. She was culled.
 - ◊ Another cow had spiked to 8 million SCC at 127 DIM, dropped nearly 20% in milk, and was producing 6,000 lbs. below herd mates. Despite no prior SCC issues, she was underperforming and was also culled.

The Results

↓SCC 15%

Bulk Tank SCC dropped by 15%

- Returned below 200,000

↑Premiums

Milk premiums restored

- Qualified for \$0.30/cwt bonus

↑\$9,400/mo

\$9,400 in added income that month

- The herd had 965 milking cows with a daily shipment of 103,000 lbs. At \$0.30/cwt, that's an added \$309 per day — or nearly \$9,400 per month. Even after removing the 4 highest-SCC cows — which accounted for 495 lbs./day of milk — the herd still came out ahead by qualifying for the full milk quality premium.

↓Time

Time saved

- SCC alerts and reports helped the team act before production dipped or premiums were lost



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www.drms.org/HerdHQ/What-Is-HerdHQ