

## MASTITIS

Bulk tank culture can be used to screen for the presence of three key contagious pathogens, where the main reservoir of infection is the cow's udder. They are:

- *Streptococcus agalactiae*
- *Staphylococcus aureus*
- *Mycoplasma* species

Bulk culture will therefore tell you whether these bacteria are present on the farm and if they become eradicated, culture will monitor the continued freedom of the farm from these infections.

Generally, bulk tank culture is very sensitive to the presence of a single infected cow with *Streptococcus agalactiae* or *Mycoplasma*. *Staphylococcus aureus* will occasionally be missed, despite its presence on the farm. This is due to the intermittent excretion of a small number of bacteria from infected mammary glands, hence the importance of testing a composite sample collected over 3 – 5 days.

The finding of environmental organisms such as coliforms and the Environmental *Streptococci* in the bulk tank is not unusual. Their presence does not usually mean that they are causing mastitis in this situation, as the major source of these bacteria in the bulk tank will be manure contaminated teats. Similarly, the presence of Coagulase negative *Staphylococci* ( CNS ) usually means that there are large numbers on the teat skin when the milking units are attached. This would be the case if dipping practices were inadequate.