

# Valacta

the Quebec dairy production centre of expertise

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## Udder Health: True Value

Two years later, how are you doing?

*Udder Health: True Value*—does the name ring a bell? That's right, it's the Valacta training course that was given in 2010. A third of Quebec's dairy producers attended the training throughout the province. Now two years later, how are you doing? Did the knowledge you acquired affect your herd's somatic cell count (SCC)?

Attending a training course is a good idea. But if the know-how isn't translated into concrete action on the farm, the results are likely to be unimpressive. Have you improved the way you do things since attending the *Udder Health: True Value* training session? Only you can answer that question.

By looking at milk recording data, however, it is possible to assess the impact of these training courses on specific indicators such as the SCC. But before launching into data interpretation, let's look back at how the *Udder Health: True Value* training programme was deployed:

### 1-Training for veterinarians

The aim of the training session given by the *Faculté de médecine vétérinaire* and the AMVPQ was to provide veterinary practitioners with the most recent information on udder health. As well, each veterinarian received a TACTIC Udder Health Kit from the CBMRN. The kit outlines a five-point intervention approach and includes an assortment of tools ready for use on the farm.

Consult your veterinarian to learn more about the strategy and the many practical tools provided in the TACTIC Udder Health Kit. [www.medvet.umontreal.ca/reseau\\_mammite/en/page.php?p=169&tm=i](http://www.medvet.umontreal.ca/reseau_mammite/en/page.php?p=169&tm=i)

### 2-Training for other dairy sector stakeholders

It is important that all dairy industry partners working with producers be working in the same direction. Hence a knowledge transfer was carried out to pass information on to the various advisors involved in milk quality and udder health management.

All those who took part in the session received a series of practical illustrated factsheets from the CBMRN. These sheets are excellent reference and training tools for the implementation of best udder health management practices. If you don't already have a set of these factsheets, you can access them in electronic format at [www.mastitisnetwork.org](http://www.mastitisnetwork.org)

You just need to print them—and, most importantly, use them!

### 3-Training for dairy producers

The last but by no means least

important step was the *Udder Health: True Value* training course offered by veterinary practitioners and Valacta in 2010. More than 2,000 dairy producers took part in one of the 92 sessions organized throughout Quebec. Those who attended the sessions learned some key concepts that they could put into practice with their herds, with the support of their veterinarians and various service providers.

And now for the killer question: did the training courses contribute to any improvements in udder health in the herds of the producers who took part?

### The effect of the training course on herd SCC

Figure 1 compares the variations in herd SCC for the period from January 2007 to January 2012. The TOOK PART line represents the dairy operations from which at least one representative took part in the training course. The DID NOT TAKE PART line refers to those farms from which no personnel took the course.

During the three years prior to the training course (2007 to 2010), the average SCC of the herds belonging to the farms that subsequently took part in the 2010 training was higher than that of the other herds.

These producers were probably unhappy with their situation and looking for solutions. The *Udder Health: True Value* training course seems to have answered a need.

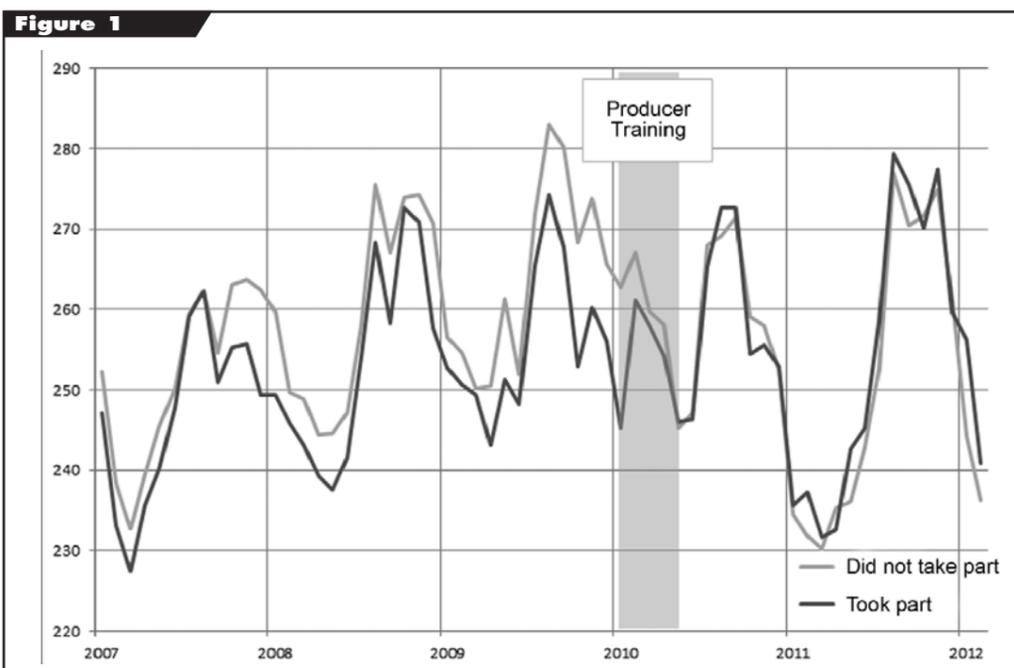
The effect on herd SCC has been positive. The producers who took the course quickly caught up with their colleagues. The most gratifying finding is that the effect is a lasting one. Hence it seems that the discussions between producers and on-farm stakeholders and the information provided at the training sessions were effective in promoting good long-term udder health management by producers and their team of service providers.

### So what remains of the training now?

What remains is a significant and lasting improvement in the quality of the milk from the farms belonging to the producers who took the course.

The *Udder Health: True Value* training course not only contributed to providing producers, veterinarians and other stakeholders with information, it especially brought about positive changes in the way dairy producers do things. At the end of the day, that's what counts.

Thus we have clear proof that mobilizing resources in a collaborative effort can indeed produce



and sustain real changes on the farm. We've taken a step in the right direction, but there is still work to be done. Rest assured that your partners will continue to support you in your efforts.

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## Good quality milk: A winning strategy that pays off!

### 1. Milk quality premiums

Incentives have gradually been introduced to support producers in their efforts. These measures come within the scope of a provincial strategy aimed at improving udder health, developed in collaboration with your partners. The overall objective of this partnership is to mobilize dairy producers and industry stakeholders to position Quebec as a global leader in milk quality.

Here is a reminder of the incentives put in place by the FPLQ to reward producers who invest in milk quality improvement:

- Since 1 August 2010, you can receive \$0.50/hectolitre (from the pool fund) if you meet the following quality standards:
 

1 August 2010	SC < 300,000	TB < 40,000
1 August 2011	SC < 250,000	TB < 30,000
1 August 2012	SC < 200,000	TB < 20,000

In December 2011, 47 per cent of dairy producers qualified for this premium.

- In 2011, the average annual SCC in Quebec fell below the 250,000 mark for the first time. This record achievement gave producers access to a new milk quality premium.

To take advantage of this premium, you must meet the two following standards on a monthly basis: TB/mL ≤ 15,000 and SC/mL ≤ 150,000. In February 2012, 15 per cent of producers qualified for the \$0.384/hL premium.

This premium is funded by a 6¢/hL contribution paid by producers (3¢/hL) and processors (3¢/hL). The money thus collected is distributed each month to producers who qualify. The amount of the premium therefore varies according to the number of qualifying dairy farms.

### 2. Reducing the limit to 400,000

Quebec producers have also agreed to lower the somatic cell count (SCC) limit from 500,000 to 400,000, as of 1 August 2012, in order to bring it to the level in effect in many of the major milk-producing countries.

Hence the days of the 500,000 SCC are numbered. If you haven't already done so, you would be well advised to review your udder health management practices. On the one hand, you'll avoid the penalties for exceeding the allowable limit. On the other hand, you'll be able to take advantage of the quality premiums. But the main advantage is that you'll reap the benefits of having healthier cows that produce more milk.

Can you really afford to miss out on all this? Remember, there is a wide range of tools and expert resources available to guide you through the process. It's up to you to make the most of them.

The partners in the Provincial Udder Health Strategy are the Association des médecins vétérinaires praticiens du Québec (AMVPQ), the Faculté de médecine vétérinaire, the Canadian Bovine Mastitis Research Network (CBMRN), Valacta, and the Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec.