Milk Culture Collection Procedures

For the best possible results from the laboratory, take samples directly from the cow using sterile technique as outlined below. Do not take samples via the milking equipment or weight meter.

Please Note: Laboratory fees will be applied regardless of whether clean or contaminated samples are submitted.

- Label bottles prior to sampling with a waterproof marker with the vial identification numbers, and indicate cow name and date. If quarter samples are collected, designate each quarter sampled as RF, RH, LF, or LH.
- Collect the samples immediately before milking. Wear gloves for sampling.
- Clean and dry the udder using standard good udder preparation, as would be done for milking. Use individual paper towels to dry the teats prior to sampling.
- Scrub each teat-end opening thoroughly in three directions with a cotton ball soaked in 70% alcohol. A separate cotton ball should be used for each teat.
- Discard one or two streams of milk.
- Remove the vial cap carefully and fill the bottle about 2/3 full. Do not touch the rim with the teat or your fingers. Begin sample collection from the closest teat then to the teats on the far side of the udder. The tube or vial should be at a 45-degree angle when collecting the sample.
- To collect cow composite samples, collect an approximately equal volume of milk from each quarter in one sample bottle. There is a greater risk of contamination of composite sampling.
- Collect milk samples from quarters with clinical mastitis before treatment.
- Cool samples on cold packs in a portable cooler as they are collected. Refrigerate samples immediately. Wrap and package samples thoroughly to insulate them and keep them cool during shipment to the laboratory. Samples much arrive within 24 hours of collection. Samples to be cultured at a later date (after 24-48 hours) should be frozen.
- Ship samples to diagnostic services at the Atlantic Veterinary College.
- Please call the Bacteriology Laboratory at 902-566-0821 for more information or assistance if required.