

## Using bulk milk as a sample

Bulk milk samples are a very cost effective method of testing many animals at once. The sensitivity of the tests make this type of approach both possible and worthwhile.

Virology Division, CVRL finds samples of bulk milk most useful for IBR antibody (ELISA) and BVD virus (PCR). They can be used to give a useful impression of herd immunity and/or circulating disease.

**Only cows which are currently milking ie putting into the bulk milk tank on the day the sample is taken are assessed by a bulk milk tank test.**



50ml of fresh milk in a 50 ml universal (Sarstedt or similar type) is the best sample. Preferably taken just after an agitation cycle. Samples should be taken off the top of the tank and not at the outlet.

This is the minimum volume required for each test method in place at CVRL.

Sending less milk than this makes the test invalid and unpredictable.

Ideally two 50 ml milk samples should be sent together and we can freeze one down as a back-up (to protect against spillages).

Be wary of reusing other types of containers as disinfectants and bacteria can degrade the milk sample.

All milk contains normal teat and udder bacteria. Milk samples deteriorate when posted (even in winter). Testing sour, “off” or rancid samples for antibody or virus is pointless.

To counteract this

- 1) Refrigerate (don't freeze) ASAP after collection. Keep refrigerated until posting.
- and
- 2) Add Lactab or Brotab "10" tablets (or equivalent) to the milk.

It costs exactly the same to transport and test a poor quality milk sample but the subsequent results are of questionable value.

**It is important to record the number of cows currently milking on the day the bulk sample was collected. Without this information, it is impossible to calculate dilution effects.**



Again use common sense when sending samples to the laboratory. Only post milk samples Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Don't post on over bank holidays, postal strikes, etc.

### **Supplier contact info**

**Lennox Laboratory Supplies Ltd** (Tablets)  
John F. Kennedy Drive, Naas Road, Dublin 12.

**Sarstedt** (Universal containers)  
Sinnottstown Lane, Drinagh, Wexford

**Thompson and Capper** (Tablets)  
Hardwick Road, Astmoor, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1PH, UK

**Munster AI & Farm Services Group** (Tablets)  
Ballyvorsheen, Mallow, Co. Cork

If you locate or use alternative satisfactory suppliers, please contact the CVRL on (01) 6157241

