

Clinical Mastitis

Clinical cases of mastitis are those where the cow displays definitive [symptoms of the disease](#). These may be **acute**, where the disease flares up relatively suddenly in a formerly healthy cow; these cases may be further defined as **per-acute**, where the rapid onset of severe inflammation, pain and systemic symptoms results in a severely ill cow within a short period of time, or **sub-acute** mastitis, the most frequently seen instance of the disease, where the few symptoms tend to be mild inflammation in the udder and visible changes to the milk, such as small clots.

Long-term recurring persistent cases of the disease are termed **chronic**. These cases may show few symptoms between repeated occasional flare-ups of the disease where symptoms are visible and can continue over periods of several months. Often with chronic mastitis, irreversible damage is caused to the udder from the repeated clinical occurrences of the illness, and often these cows are culled.

Sub-clinical mastitis

Many incidences of mastitis are directly indicated only by a high individual cow Somatic Cell Count through milk recording schemes or via [California Mastitis Testing](#); the cow herself displaying no obvious clinical symptoms of the illness and no visible changes to the composition of her milk. These cases of mastitis are termed **sub-clinical**, and can be up to 40 times more common than clinical cases of the illness.

Subclinical infection is more likely to be caused by contagious [pathogens](#). The presence of a causative pathogen is done via a [bacteriological culture](#) and indirect indications of subclinical mastitis can be given via electro-conductivity [testing of milk](#), which is performed in an automated form in many modern parlours and robotic milking systems.

A subclinical cow, while appearing unaffected by the illness, may experience a reduction in yield potential due to the high SCC, and certainly represents a possible source of infection for other cows, who can become subclinical sufferers themselves, or may go on to show clinical signs of the illness, due to differences in immune status between cows.