

Flowcharts

Notice that Step 3 in Figure 4 refers to another SOP, called “Cows With Abnormal Milk.” This SOP is likely to require many decisions to determine what is wrong with the milk, if a sample should be taken, whether the cow should be treated, etc. Procedures that require many decisions should be presented as a flowchart.

Flowcharts are simply a graphic way to present the logical steps in a decision-making process. While normal milking procedures are quite straightforward and repetitive, deciding what to do about a cow with abnormal milk certainly is not. Many different factors such as mastitis or an injury may cause the abnormal milk. The appropriate response to each situation may be dramatically different. A flowchart provides an easy-to-follow mechanism for walking a worker through a series of logical decisions and the steps that should be taken as a result.

Figure 6 is a flowchart depicting how milkers should deal with cows showing abnormal milk. Note that the procedure begins in the top left-hand corner and proceeds generally to the right and downward, depending on which decisions are made. You should use the generally accepted symbols for flowcharts, which are as follows:

START/END A flattened oval represents a starting or ending point.

ACTION A rectangle indicates the worker should perform an action of some sort.

Unlabeled arrows between other symbols indicate the direction of flow.

DECISION Diamonds are the accepted symbol for a decision point. They must have two or more arrows leading away from them toward alternatives.

YES Decision arrows lead away from a diamond and toward an appropriate action or

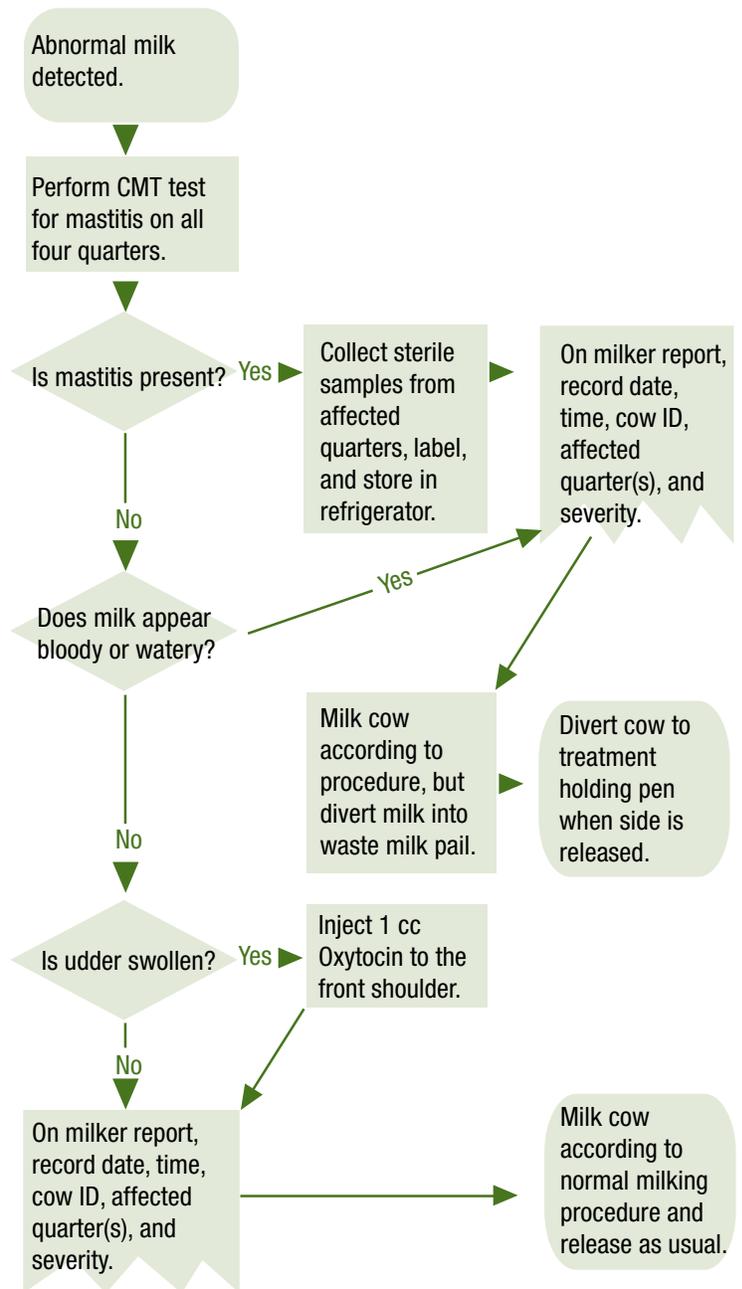
> 103° follow-up decision. At least two alternatives must lead from each decision diamond. Many times they will be yes and no, but they also could involve three or more choices. For example, after taking a temperature, you might have several options to follow, depending on the results.

RECORD A rectangle with a ragged bottom edge indicates that a record or notation should be written down. You might use this in an SOP to record how much cows were fed, or to note when a job is completed.

Regardless of the SOP format that you choose to use, there are a few elements of information that should be included

FIGURE 6. SAMPLE FLOW CHART OPERATING PROCEDURE FORMAT.

Clarity Farms Parlor SOP #5, Cows With Abnormal Milk
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with every SOP. These include a clear and descriptive title; the name of the author or person responsible for the SOP; and the date on which the SOP or revision becomes effective. Businesses that use many SOPs should adopt a logical numbering scheme for filing and to keep track of revisions. In addition, some SOPs should include lists of materials or tools needed to complete the job. All SOPs that involve hazardous working conditions should include a list of safety precautions.