

## Global Criteria: Animal Care

Revision Date: January, 2024

**Strategic Intent:** Dairy Animals are treated with care, and are free from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury and disease, fear and distress, and are able to engage with relatively normal patterns of animal behaviour.

**Indicator:** Somatic Cell Count (SCC) is measured to monitor animal health. From January 2024, the DSF is transitioning from the SCC indicator to the development and implementation of an annually reviewed Animal Health and Welfare Plan.

**Theory of change:** The Somatic Cell Count is a key indicator of animal health and of milk quality as the majority of these cells are white blood cells, which become present in increasing numbers as an immune response to an infectious organism, predominantly a mastitis causing pathogen. A lower SCC indicates better animal health.

Developing and implementing an Animal Health & Welfare Plan will help enhance animal disease prevention and control and improve animal welfare on-farm. The 'plan approach' is proactive and forward looking, farm specific and aims to reduce the number of 'challenges'. Reviewing annually will ensure plans remain relevant and continually build on progress made.

**Reporting Strategy:** Each participating member organization that has prioritized this criterion will define how Somatic Cell Counts (SCC) should be measured, and the SCC reporting frequency for their participants (weekly, monthly, etc.). The metric for reporting will be the 12 month arithmetic mean of SCC (1000 cells/ml) plus the standard deviation and the number of observations. Member organizations will report the number of their participants who have reported Somatic Cell Counts during the assessment period.

New indicator metric - Each DSF member that has prioritized this criteria will define what constitutes an Animal Health & Welfare Plan in relation to the local situation. Member organizations will report the number of Animal Health & Welfare Plans implemented at the end of the reporting year.

[Click here for details of the process transitioning to the new indicator metric.](#)

**Reporting Schedule:** Baseline established 2017

Annual reporting period is calendar year (January 1- December 31)

Reports submitted to DSF by March 31 each subsequent year

**Examples of resources available for Somatic Cell Count Measurement:**

Dairy NZ Bulk Milk Somatic Cell Counts (SCC)

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/mastitis/bulk-milk-scc/>

Mastitis Control and Management: Mastitis in Cattle – Getting the most from Cell Counts, National Animal Disease Information Service (NADIS)

<http://www.nadis.org.uk/bulletins/mastitis-control-and-management/mastitis-part-3-getting-the-most-from-cell-counts.aspx>

A **DSF Animal Health & Welfare Plan template** can be downloaded from the Resources Centre in the [Members Area](#) of the DSF website.