

On-farm somatic cell count: Screening for mastitis in dairy goats



A somatic cell count test is used to indicate evidence of infection and provide a picture of overall udder health.

On-farm somatic cell count tests can be useful screening tools to help dairy goat producers manage their herds and improve milk quality. Early mastitis detection may help your operation in many ways:

- increase milk yield
- lower treatment costs
- increase premiums
- reduce culling rate

Goals of somatic cell testing:

- Improve overall herd health (by monitoring individual animals)
- Lower bulk tank cell count (by keeping high count milk out of the tank)

SCC test results: What do they mean?

Somatic cell counts are widely used as an evaluation tool for milk quality and as an indicator of udder health. Intramammary infection is the major cause of elevated somatic cell counts (SCCs) in dairy ruminants. In order to assure quality milk supplies, milk producers are held to “maximum level standards” by health officials. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has set allowable maximum levels of SCC for Grade A Goat milk at 1,000,000 cells/mL.

Herd Management decisions should not be based on the results of one test alone. The following are useful guidelines for interpreting somatic cell test results in your herd.

Cell Count (cells/mL)	Interpretation of Results	Suggested Action Plan
Less than 500,000	Normal	Monitor monthly
500,000 to 1,000,000	Possible weak udder infection	Monitor monthly
1,000,000 to 1,500,000	Indicates possible udder health problems	Monitor weekly
Over 1,500,000	Indicates infection of the udder	Retest within 3 days. If still high, culture and consult a veterinarian

Some sources suggest that healthy animals should have a somatic cell count less than 1,000 cells/mL.

Testing Goat Milk

The industry standard for counting somatic cells in goat milk is the Green Stain. This is a microscopic method that differentiates between cells and cellular debris, both of which are shed in the milk. However, it is a complex process that can only be performed in a laboratory by trained professionals.



On-farm somatic cell tests allow dairy producers to make management decisions in a timely manner without sending samples to the laboratory and waiting for results.

The PortaSCC® goat milk test is a simple and reliable on-farm method for testing milk from individual goats. This test has been validated against the Green Stain, and field tested by dairy goat producers, processors and university researchers.

Factors to keep in mind when interpreting SCC test results:

Sometimes somatic cell counts increase due to non-infectious factors. Certain factors that may increase the somatic cell counts in goat milk are:

- Days in lactation
- Parity
- Variability before, during and after milking
- Acidosis and high-grain feeding
- CAE
- Breed effects
- Tetracyclines
- Some nutritional supplements

Tip: One useful way to distinguish between udder health and other factors affecting SCC in goat milk is to compare SCC from each udder half in the same animal. If both tests are high, factors other than udder health may be involved.

Benefits of the PortaSCC® goat milk test

- Especially developed to test goat milk from individual animals (not recommended for bulk tank)
- Results within minutes
- No special training needed
- Pays for itself in increased premiums and production

Easy to read results!

The PortaSCC® goat milk test uses a color chart to indicate test results.



Color levels (cells/mL):

500,000
1,000,000
1,500,000
3,000,000

See inside for interpretation and recommendations.

Intended Use:

This test is intended solely for the estimation of somatic cell count in fresh goat milk within eight hours of milking. The test is not a laboratory reference method and should not be used as a diagnostic test. Consult a veterinarian before starting any treatment.

Somatic Cell Monitoring

Goat Milk Quality and Mastitis



PortaCheck, Inc.
1 Whittendale Drive, Suite E
Moorestown, NJ 08057
856.231.8894 • www.portacheck.com

CHECK OUR WEBSITE
TO FIND A LOCAL DEALER

1 Whittendale Drive, Suite E
Moorestown, NJ 08057
856.231.8894
www.portacheck.com