



# What causes blackspot and how can it be controlled?

Blackspot is the common name for lesions that look like necrotic craters with raised edges and a black spot of ulceration or scab in the centre. The ulcers commonly extend to include the teat opening, and the damaged tissue provides a site for infection (e.g. with *Fusobacterium necrophorum*) and bacterial multiplication (e.g. *Staphylococcus aureus*) (Radostits 1994).

Although blackspot is not an infectious disease, tissue damage extending to the teat opening and bacterial multiplication at the teat end makes affected cows very susceptible to mastitis. Teat openings become occluded and cows often become slow milkers.

Diagnosis is made on the clinical appearance of lesions. If only one or two cows are affected, poor teat conformation may be contributing to teat damage at milking. Milking machine function should be thoroughly checked if more than one or two cows are affected because blackspot is often associated with failure of pulsation, excessive vacuum or over milking.

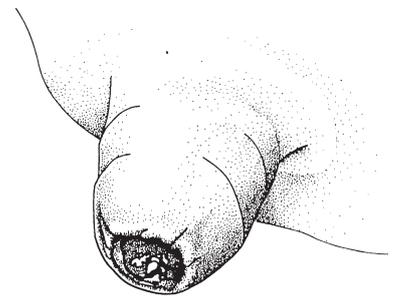
Management of blackspot in a herd involves:

- treating the lesions with antiseptic ointments or chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide or iodine;
- using teat disinfection to minimise bacterial infection of lesions; and
- checking the milking machine function.

Veterinarians may consider incising lesions of very badly affected teats (e.g. with a concealed teat-knife) to increase the size of the occluded teat opening and increase blood supply to the area. Severe lesions may be intractable to treatment.

## Key paper

Radostits OM, Blood DC, Gay CC. Miscellaneous abnormalities of the udder and teats. In: Veterinary Medicine, Chapter 15, 8th edition. Bailliere Tindall, London, 1994:616-617.



**Blackspot**

[Technote6](#) describes how to monitor machine function.

