|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1. Quarter-level prevalence of pathogens (or grouping of similar pathogens) causing intramammary infections [median (range)] by farm, stratified by facility type. 3,332 quarter-level observations were collected from 1,456 quarters belonging to 382 cows during a longitudinal, cross-sectional observational study of 10 certified organic dairy farms in Vermont (US). The quarter-level prevalence represents the percent of sampled quarters infected with a particular pathogen over all sampled quarters at risk where IMI status could be determined for that farm visit. Median and range of quarter-level prevalence for each herd were calculated using all consecutive visits to a particular farm. Median and range of quarter-level prevalence for tiestalls (TS) and bedded packs (BP) were calculated over all visits to TS (n = 15) and BP (n = 15), respectively. Overall median and range of quarter-level prevalence were calculated using all visits to all 10 farms (n = 30). | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | TS-1 | TS-2 | TS-3 | TS-4 | TS-5 | TS avg. | BP-1 | BP-2 | BP-3 | BP-4 | BP-5 | BP avg. | Overall |
| Num. farm visits | | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 15 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 30 |
| Pathogen (group) | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *Staphylococcus aureus* | | 3.5 (3.1-4) | 1.9 (1.7-2.4) | 4 (3.4-4.1) | 3.5 (3.2-3.9) | 0.9 (0.9-1) | 3.2 (0.9-4.1) | 4.8 (4.7-8.4) | 13.1 (11.7-14.1) | 0.8 (0-2.6) | 1.3 (0.9-1.7) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 2.6 (0-14.1) | 3.2 (0-14.1) |
|  | Non-*aureus* staphylococci and mammaliicocci | | 10 (9.7-10.4) | 19.6 (16.7-23.2) | 24 (22.3-25.6) | 15.8 (14.2-18.5) | 20.4 (19-24.5) | 19 (9.7-25.6) | 24.8 (21.9-39.8) | 14.1 (12.8-18.2) | 23.6 (21.9-25.5) | 19.4 (17.6-21.1) | 20.6 (19.4-22.4) | 21.1 (12.8-39.8) | 20 (9.7-39.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus agnetis* | 2 (1.8-2.1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-2.1) | 2.4 (0.8-3.6) | 1.1 (0-2) | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-0.9) | 0.8 (0.8-0.9) | 0.8 (0-3.6) | 0.8 (0-3.6) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus auricularis* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus capitis* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus chromogenes* | 6 (5.3-6.3) | 13.1 (11.7-15.9) | 16.2 (14.9-16.8) | 8.8 (7.1-8.9) | 15.5 (13.8-15.5) | 13.1 (5.3-16.8) | 15.2 (13.3-21.7) | 7.8 (6.5-10.1) | 19.5 (17.5-21.8) | 15.9 (14.3-17.4) | 16.8 (16.1-17.6) | 16.1 (6.5-21.8) | 14.6 (5.3-21.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus cohnii* | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus devriesei* | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 1.9 (1.7-2.7) | 0 (0-2.7) | 0.8 (0.8-2.4) | 1 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.4) | 0 (0-2.7) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus epidermidis* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1) | 0 (0-1) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus equorum* | 0 (0-0) | 3.7 (1.7-3.7) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 1 (0.9-1.7) | 0 (0-3.7) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-3.7) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus gallinarum* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-1.2) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus haemolyticus* | 1 (0.9-1) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0.8-1.7) | 1.6 (1.6-1.8) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0.9 (0-1.8) | 3.1 (2.4-4.8) | 3 (2.1-3.3) | 3.3 (2.7-3.5) | 0.9 (0.8-0.9) | 0.8 (0-1.9) | 2.7 (0-4.8) | 1.3 (0-4.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus hominis* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus hyicus* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0.8-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 1 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-1.1) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus pseudintermedius* | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus saprophyticus* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus simulans* | 1 (0.9-1) | 0 (0-0) | 3.2 (2.5-4.3) | 3.2 (3.1-3.5) | 0 (0-0) | 1 (0-4.3) | 2.4 (2.3-2.4) | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-0.9) | 0.9 (0.8-0.9) | 1.5 (0.8-1.9) | 0.9 (0-2.4) | 0.9 (0-4.3) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus succinus* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1) | 0 (0-1) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus warneri* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 2.5 (2.4-2.6) | 1.6 (1.6-1.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.6) | 1.6 (0.8-2.4) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.4) | 0 (0-2.6) |
|  | | *Staphylococcus xylosus* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 1 (0.9-1.8) | 0 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0.5 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-0) | 0.9 (0.8-0.9) | 0.8 (0.8-0.9) | 0 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-1.8) |
|  | | *Mammaliicoccus fleurettii* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 1 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.8) |
|  | | *Mammaliicoccus sciuri* | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) |
|  | | *Mammaliicoccus vitilinus* | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) |
|  | *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* | | 0 (0-0) | 3.3 (2.8-7.3) | 1.7 (0.8-1.7) | 0.8 (0.8-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0-7.3) | 0 (0-0) | 1.6 (1.1-2) | 0.9 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2) | 0.4 (0-7.3) |
|  | *Streptococcus uberis* | | 1 (0.9-1) | 5.6 (5-6.1) | 5 (4-5.1) | 2.4 (2.4-2.6) | 0.9 (0.9-1) | 2.4 (0.9-6.1) | 3.6 (3.2-5.5) | 4.2 (1.1-6.1) | 2.4 (1.8-3.5) | 0.4 (0-0.8) | 5.3 (4-5.6) | 3.6 (0-6.1) | 3.4 (0-6.1) |
|  | *Aerococcus* spp.1 | | 1 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-1.7) | 0 (0-1.7) | 0 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-1.8) | 0 (0-4.8) | 0.5 (0-4) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 1.6 (0-3.7) | 0 (0-4.8) | 0 (0-4.8) |
|  | Other streptococcal and streptococcal-like organisms2 | | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0.5 (0-1.1) | 0 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-1.6) |
|  | *Corynebacterium* spp.3 | | 4 (0.9-6.3) | 7.5 (6.7-11) | 2.4 (0.8-2.6) | 1.6 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-0.9) | 1.6 (0-11) | 0.8 (0-8.4) | 11.5 (5.3-20.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0.4 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-20.2) | 0.9 (0-20.2) |
|  | *Kocuria* spp.4 | | 1 (0-3.5) | 0 (0-0.8) | 1.6 (0-2.6) | 0 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-3.5) | 0 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.6) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.6) | 0 (0-3.5) |
|  | Other gram-positive bacteria | | 1 (0.9-1) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 0.8 (0-1.6) | 0 (0-1.8) | 0.8 (0-1.8) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 2.1 (1-4.3) | 0 (0-0) | 1.3 (0.8-1.8) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 0.8 (0-4.3) | 0.8 (0-4.3) |
|  | Coliforms5 | | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 1.1 (1-2) | 1.8 (0-2.4) | 0.5 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-2.4) | 0 (0-2.4) |
|  | Other gram-negative bacteria | | 0.9 (0-2) | 0.9 (0.8-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0.8 (0-0.8) | 0.9 (0-0.9) | 0.8 (0-2) | 0 (0-0) | 0.5 (0-2) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0.8 (0-1.7) | 0 (0-0.9) | 0 (0-2) | 0 (0-2) |
|  | *Candida rugosa* | | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-1.2) | 0 (0-1.2) |
|  | Unable to be identified | | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0) | 0 (0-0.8) |
| 1 *Aerococcus* sp. (genus-level identification only), *Aerococcus viridans* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2Other streptococcal and streptococcal-like organisms not listed separately: *Streptococcus* sp*.* (genus-level identification only)*, Streptococcus canis, Enterococcus saccharolyticus* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 *Corynebacterium* sp. (genus-level identification only), *C. amycolatum, C. callunae, C. casei, C. confusum, C. glutamicum, C. stationis, C. ulcerans, C. variabile, C. xerosis* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 *Kocuria* sp. (genus-level identification only), *Kocuria* *carniphila, Kocuria* *palustris* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 *Enterobacter* sp. (genus-level identification only), *Escherichia coli, Klebsiella aerogenes, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Klebsiella variicola, Serratia marcescens* | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

***Results***

*Description of enrolled herds*

Participating herds milked an average of 69.5 cows (median: 70; range: 44-105) of various breeds. The mean rolling herd average for farms enrolled was 13,995 lbs. (median: 13,250 lbs.; range: 10,675-21,204 lbs.). Three visits were completed at 8 farms, 1 herd was sampled twice, and 1 was sampled 4 times before interruption by the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, 33.6 days elapsed between sequential farm visits for each herd (median: 34; range: 27-43). Five farms housed cows in a tiestall bedded with wood shavings, and 5 utilized a bedded pack system (3 actively managed for composting, 2 static). Of the 5 enrolled BP farms, 2 were compost bedded-packs, utilizing aerobic decomposition to break down a bedding material of dry, fine wood sawdust or shavings (The Dairyland Initiative, 2024; Bewley et al., 2017; Endres, 2021). These 2 farms bedded solely with shavings/sawdust, adding new bedding only as needed, and cultivated the pack twice a day. Two other farms used a “traditional” or “deep bedded pack” system, where large volumes of fresh, dry straw (or poor-quality hay) sufficient to keep cows clean and dry was added daily to a mass of bedding that accumulates over the 6-8 months cows are housed indoors (The Dairyland Initiative, 2024; Thurgood, 2009; Benson, 2012; Bewley et al., 2017). The 1 remaining farm fell somewhere between these 2 types of BP; this farm bedded with straw and woodchips and cultivated every 48 hrs., adding chopped hay and woodchips every time the pack was cultivated. The depth of the 5 packs ranged from 0.9-1.7 m of organic material (measured at visit when management questionnaire was administered).

*Prevalence of intramammary infections*

In total, 1,536 quarters belonging to 384 cows were enrolled for at least one visit throughout the study, for a total of 4,212 quarter-observations collected. Of these, 880 quarter-observations were excluded from further analyses: 34 quarter-observations did not meet definition of either having an IMI or being healthy; 88 quarter-observations were from enrolled quarters that were non-lactating mammary glands (blind); 224 quarter-observations were excluded due to a sampling error (e.g., missing cow ID, colony not selected from quartermilk culture, duplicate quartermilk sample missing); and 534 quarter-observations were excluded because ≥ 1 of the 2 duplicate quartermilk samples collected was classified as contaminated (12.7% of total quarter-observations collected).

The final data set for describing quarter-level prevalence of all pathogens causing IMI on these 10 certified organic dairy farms consisted of 3,332 quarter-observations where the IMI status of the quarter could be determined at that visit (Table1). There were 2,290 quarter-observations from healthy quarters. Observations included in the final data set came from 1,456 quarters of 382 cows across all 10 herds included in the field study. The mean (median; range) number of cows included per herd was 38.2 (38; 35-41), whereas the number of quarters included per cow was 3.8 (4; 1-4). The mean number of observations per quarter included was 2.3 (2; 1-4).

There were 1,042 quarter-observations from quarters with an IMI at time of sampling: 953 with an IMI due to a single pathogen (28.6% of all quarter-observations), and 89 with a mixed infection (2.7% of all quarter-observations). Overall, the majority of IMI were caused by NASM species (19.9%), followed by *Staphylococcus aureus* (3.6%) and *Corynebacterium* species (3.1%). *Streptococcus uberis* and *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* were the next most commonly found pathogens (3.1% and 0.9%, respectively). Twenty-one different NASM were identified to be causing IMI, with *S. chromogenes* as the dominant species (13.6%). The next most frequently isolated NASM were *S. haemolyticus* (1.5%), *S. simulans* (1.3%), *S. warneri* (0.6%), and *S. equorum/S. devriesei* (both 0.6%).

Twenty-seven percent of observations were the sole observation contributed to the data set by a given quarter, 41% came from quarters contributing 2 time points, and 31% and 1% came from quarters contributing 3 and 4 observations, respectively. The average time elapsed between sequential observations of a quarter was 37.1 days (median: 34.5; SD: 11.6), with an overall range of 27-96 days.

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