Temporal Trends in Bulk Tank Somatic Cell Count and Total Bacterial Count in Irish Dairy Herds During the Past Decade. By Berry et al., page 4083. Two commonly used indicators of bulk tank milk quality are somatic cell count and total bacterial count. Annual bulk tank somatic cell count, from a large proportion of Irish dairy herds, decreased from 1994 to 2000, but is slowly beginning to increase. Annual bulk tank total bacterial count decreased from 1994 to 2004. Monthly cell count, averaged across herds, was lowest in April and May and greatest in November and December.