



JANUARY 2023 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

Focus on the 3 biggies to get calves off to a strong start!

#1: COLOSTRUM

- Fresh is best (or pasteurized!), High octane only- Test it! & Have a back up plan

#2: MAXIMIZE INTAKES

- Ramp up meals – feed more milk! Early introduction to starter, clean, & easy to access

#3: PREVENT DISEASE / TREAT QUICKLY & APPROPRIATELY

- Quick removal from maternity, Control Crypto, keep calves drinking through scours

Feeding calves is one of the most frustrating jobs on the farm. The job can be overwhelming, frustrating, hectic (how about a calvalanche to start your day off with 5 new calves in one morning?) It can also be one of the most rewarding jobs- when calves are healthy that is.

While there are a lot of different factors that go into calf raising, sometimes keeping it simple and focusing on the basics can achieve a lot of success. 1) colostrum, 2) intake and 3) disease prevention are the areas which if perfected, can often “take care of” the rest. Major issues with maternity pen stocking density, dystocia, colostrum harvesting, milk delivery, bedding, and ventilation will have to be addressed. If you feel there are big issues to be sorted out on these deeper topics, please feel comfortable opening the discussion with your herd veterinarian. We are here to help! For this newsletter, let's focus on our simple list of 1-3.

#1: Colostrum

Getting colostrum into calves within 30 minutes of birth is the single biggest thing you can do to improve the health and performance of your calves. If you still aren't measuring your colostrum before feeding, please consider purchasing a brix refractometer to make sure you aren't feeding Regular when you ought to be feeding Premium. Here is an example to illustrate why this is so important.

The rule of thumb is to provide calves with 200 grams of the immunoglobulin protein IgG. In order to achieve this, you need a minimum concentration of 50 grams of IgG per litre of colostrum- assuming you can get a full 4L into the calf. So, what if the calf doesn't drink 4L? Or what if you spill some when you transfer it? And what if the colostrum only contains 35 grams of IgG per litre? Now, if our calf is going to be offered the recommended 200grams of IgG they would need to drink 5.7L. This of course will not be possible. The result? The immune system, health, growth and future production will be compromised. If you don't have fresh colostrum available, make sure you have a back up plan. Colostrum can be refrigerated for up to 4 days if collected using extremely clean practices. This means excellent udder prep, clean attachment, disinfected lines of the robot, spotless colostrum pails, and rapid cooling. If your calves are born too infrequently to pull this off, consider freezing colostrum in 1L bags, or having colostrum replacer on hand. A quick word about colostrum replacers. They are not created equally. Check the bag to see how many grams of IgG they are providing. If they are only providing 50 grams, this is meant to supplement maternal colostrum only. Alternatively, you would need to feed 4 bags to hit the recommended 200 grams.

#2: Maximize Intakes

A fat baby is a healthy baby. The same is true for our calves. It's okay to increase meal size for calves gradually, but you should be working up to 4L per meal within 2 weeks. The more calves consume the more they grow. The more they grow the more milk they will produce as adults. In fact, every 100 grams of average daily gain is correlated with an additional 328kg of milk production. Feeding three times a day is another great way to increase consumption.

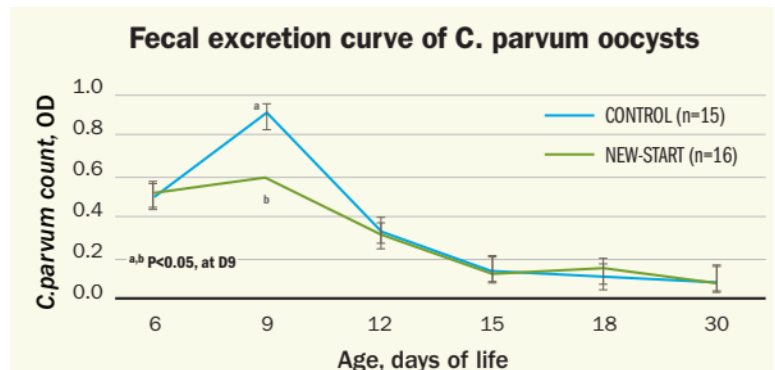
Starter intake should be promoted from a young age as well. Changing it daily is important as young calves won't pay too much attention to it, but we want it to be fresh when they do. Providing it in a bowl that sits in traditional milk pails is a great way to make it more accessible for young calves.



#3: Disease Prevention

An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure. This is extremely accurate when it comes to raising calves. The gut is most vulnerable in the first 2 weeks of life. If you can get a calf beyond this point without having an incident of scours you are nearly there! If you are struggling with scours at day 10- know you are not alone. Tracking down and addressing the source will have major benefits in reducing treatment costs, improving health and growth of your calves, not to mention alleviating a major source of frustration for the person feeding calves. Another good reason to control scours is because this dehydration event will often set the calf up to be vulnerable to go on to develop pneumonia. If you struggle with controlling *Cryptosporidium* and aren't yet using chlorine dioxide as part of your regular cleaning protocol, now is the time to start. That's because it will actually kill Crypto eggs- while not many other solutions are able to. Crypto control involves a combination of rapid removal of calves from the calving pen, strict cleaning protocols, maximizing milk intake and minimizing oral contact with manure. Products like Halocur can be helpful in reducing shedding and slowing rates of infection but are often not completely effective on their own without also employing other efforts to control the spread of Crypto.

Similarly, another tool has entered the market to help reduce Crypto shedding. We are now carrying NEW-START which utilizes the benefits of probiotics to combat Crypto. A recent Canadian trial showed that NEW-START reduced ($P < 0.05$) the peak of *Cryptosporidia* excretion in feces of young calves fed 10g/day for 30 days. Alternatively, feeding 20 grams/day for 2 weeks has been shown to have a similar effect on reducing the amount of oocysts that calves shed.



Calves with scours need pain control to keep them interested in their milk meals, and electrolytes to rehydrate them and correct their blood pH imbalance. We are very excited to now be offering Probiotech electrolytes. These electrolytes offer the best profile on the market- offering a sodium content that is more in line with what a calf with diarrhea needs. It also provides a very effective buffer- correcting calves blood pH, as well as a yeast source to act as a probiotic. Pick up a package and try it out!