



NOVEMBER 2023 DAIRY NEWSLETTER

Well, we are in the short strokes of 2023 and I'm fairly certain I am not alone in saying good riddance and see ya later! This year was a box-step style dance that had us moving a lot but not seeming to advance in any one direction, leaving us tired, thirsty and maybe wishing we had just stayed home. The cows didn't seem to care much as every day has an eat, sleep, milk, manure approach to it, however they were very interested in where that smoke smell was coming from in May/June. Heat stress in September and October was a real kick in the bits on reproductive success, hoof health in November and transition cow health still ongoing. Now they're eating a sugar -free, bland diet grown in wet, shady conditions and they're wondering what the heck they did wrong to deserve these offerings? Its amazing how much milk is made by sunlight, and how much the province is low in production across herds and across counties. The only saving grace is the consistently high butterfat, not just for herds that bought jerseys to help their ratios, but many a black and white (and occasionally red) herd is sitting at 0.3 points higher than normal. This is a year when many old farmers like to reflect back on other, more crappy-er years gone by with tales of muddier conditions, tractors more stuck, cows less milky, squirrels more squirrely but by geesh, they got thru it.

There is a good deal of optimism around us though with markets and marketing in favourable trends. There is a correction in some circles for consumers moving back to pure, wholesome products produced with an eye to environmental sustainability and a great deal of attention to animal welfare. In conversations had with non agricultural people (yes occasionally we talk socially to people outside the primary agricultural industry!) they are surprised and impressed to hear what a cow and a dairy producer can do to address water usage, electricity, and renewable natural gas production. The inclusion of dairy and beef in their diet is inescapable for high quality protein with micronutrients not found in long labelled, processed items. And the biggest source of positivity is that Ice Cream sales are up! Nothing bad can happen when people are eating more ice cream.

If you've gotten this far into the letter and are wondering where the vet advice that you've come to expect and rely on is, look no further. Newborn calves get cold.

For many producers the calving area and the newborn calf area are not in the same area of the barn or are in a different barn altogether. It does not take much to chill a wet calf and once it starts shivering it begins using up vital fat stores give to it by mother. Once these fat stores are depleted the calf is 'behind' for the better part of the entire feeding period. Long straw in a dry calving pen is the best form of initial insulation against the cold. For producers removing the calf immediately to a warming area it is best practice to cover it for the move either with straw, calf coat or blanket. The battle is always between quick removal and mother's stimulation for respiration and warming. Heat lamps, drying boxes, aggressive rubbing of the calf and warm rooms are all good ways to reduce the chill factor and of course, 4L of warm colostrum will help keep the body temperature stable. Transition milk from fresh cows should never be thrown out, especially this time of year. Feeding this provides a higher-octane milk for energy, immunoglobulins and pre biotics for proper gut health.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and hope you have an enjoyable New Year's Eve saying goodbye to 2023!