

# CALVING EASE

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## Is Cleaning Possible?

In order to do a good job of cleaning we calf raisers have to learn how to do each step properly. In addition to knowing how to do the job, what else is needed? Proper water, chemicals and supplies!

### Water

First, adequate water is a must. When too little water is available we are tempted to skip steps. We fail to rinse equipment before washing. We fail to do an acid rinse after washing. Or, even worse, we are tempted to just rinse equipment between feedings and only irregularly do a complete job of washing.

Second, is enough hot water available? If we are washing calf equipment using water from the same water supply that washes the parlor will the water heater(s) recover rapidly enough to provide 130° plus water? Or, if we are mixing milk replacer and feeding water from a heater dedicated to calf care how long will it take to recover enough to provide 130° plus water? Excessively long waits after using equipment allow milk solids to dry onto surfaces. The solids will wash off but the scrubbing will take unnecessary extra time.

Sometimes having to wait for hot water in order to wash up equipment can lead to unsanitary practices. We skip a wash. We wash with water at the available temperature even if it is well below 120°. We add extra chemicals hoping they will make up for the lack of hot water (they don't).

Third, is water quality okay for washing? Some water supplies are so hard that residues are left on equipment. Organic contaminants include bacteria, parasites and just plain suspended solids.

Solutions? Quantity: When there is not enough water in one location sometimes we just have to go some place else to clean calf equipment. Sure, it's more work to run back and forth. But, treating sick calves due to contaminated equipment is even more work!

Hot water: Industrial-quality water heaters with rapid recovery times are on many farms. Or, one or more separate water heaters are provided for the calf raiser's use. One farm installed a small twenty-gallon water heater just to serve the wash sink solving their equipment contamination problem.

Quality: Simple hardness problems may be addressed with commercial water softening chemicals like the ones available at the grocery store. More complicated problems of excessively high levels of nitrates or other minerals require professional advice.

Organic contamination may be resolved with chlorination if low levels are the issue. However, when this contamination includes pathogens, especially parasite oocysts like cryptosporidia, it may not be economically feasible to continue to use this water source and fix the problem. This situation often occurs on farms where during water supply shortages the water in the sink is switched from the regular well supply to surface sources such as ponds.

## **Chemicals**

Detergents – Just like other supplies on the farm manual-washing detergents have to be ordered in time to prevent running out. I recommend using a dry chlorinated detergent in containers that last less than four to six weeks (keeping plastic liner and lid closed to prevent chlorine loss). If household quality detergents and chlorine bleaches are used their availability is very high (grocery store) so little advance planning is needed.

Acid/sanitizers – high quality acid/sanitizers are available. They often are sold by dairy distributors that may call on farms infrequently. Advance planning is needed – often it is better to keep one gallon ahead all the time.

## **Brushes and Gloves**

If you do not already have at least one brush that will allow brushing both the outside and inside surfaces of all your storage, mixing and feeding equipment buy them now! Since brushes have a tendency to grow legs and walk away (strange creatures, these brushes), having extra brushes tucked away is a good strategy.

When we manually wash calf equipment the wash water needs to be 120° when we drain away the wash water. That means it has to be a lot hotter than that when we begin washing. Thus, we really, really need to wear rubber gloves when washing equipment. Buy enough gloves so that when pin holes appear the old gloves can immediately be replaced. Definitely do not depend on “milking gloves” made of nitrile or latex for this job.

If you know of someone that doesn't currently receive Calving Ease but would like to, tell them to **WRITE** to Calving Ease, 11047 River Road, Pavilion, NY 14525 or to **CALL** 585-591-2660 (Attica Vet Assoc. office) or **FAX** (585-591-2898) or **e-mail** [calvingease@rochester.rr.com](mailto:calvingease@rochester.rr.com) with Subscribe as the subject. Back issues may be accessed on the Internet at [www.atticacows.com](http://www.atticacows.com), select Resources menu, click on Calf Management Newsletter.

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