

Monitoring Calf Care: Goals and Thresholds

1. Newborn care and feeding colostrum:

- **Quarterly – draw blood from all heifer calves between 2 and 7 days of age on herd-check day.**
- **Goal for blood serum total protein is 80 percent 5.0 and greater, 50 percent 5.5 and greater.**
- **Quarterly – summarize the number of new navel infections requiring treatment.**
- **Goal for navel infections is less than 10 percent.**

2. Colostrum collection and storage:

- **Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of colostrum and culture for bacteria.**
- **Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.**

3. Cleaning milk feeding equipment:

- **Quarterly – collect rinse samples from (a) nursing bottle and nipple, (b) esophageal tube feeder, and (c) buckets used to store colostrum and milk replacer mixing and feeding. Culture samples for bacteria.**
- **Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.**
- **Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of milk replacer and culture for bacteria.**
- **Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.**

4. Calf growth rates:

- **Within the first three days of life, using a heart girth weight tape, estimate birth weights on all even numbered calves.**
- **Using the same tape and person, estimate weaning weights of all calves taped at birth.**
- **Quarterly – summarize the amount of weight gained by these calves and estimate average daily gain.**
- **Goal is at least 1.7 pounds average daily gain at 42 days.**

Note: When estimating rates of gain it is not appropriate to assume birth weights. In a study including over 1,000 heifer calves from two herds only two-thirds of the calves fell within a range of 20 pounds around the average. That means that fully one-third of the calves had birth weights more than ten pounds different than the mean.