

Calving Ease

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New Calf Management Resources 2016

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Five new resources have been posted recently to the Calf Facts section at www.atticacows.com.

Colostrum: Feeding Strategies [click [HERE](#)]

1. When testing colostrum quality it is recommended to take a sample from the milker bucket to use with a Colostrometer or Brix refractometer.
2. However, if hand-milked colostrum (first three or four quarts) must be used, for practical purposes it will have an antibody concentration relatively close to colostrum coming from a cow that is milked out entirely.
3. Fully forty to fifty percent of calves will voluntarily consume three or more quarts in the first feeding.
4. Always have a person available who is trained to use an esophageal tube feeder. It is common to have as many as three out of ten calves that will not voluntarily drink even two quarts of colostrum.
5. Follow best management practices when using an esophageal tube feeder for colostrum feeding. Click [HERE](#) for a review of these practices.

Colostrum: Quantity and Quality [click [HERE](#)]

1. Quality variation by lactation: Poor quality colostrum is out there for all lactations. Knowing which colostrum is under 50g/ml is a good reason to check IgG concentration before feeding.
2. Quantity to expect: Average volume of first-milking colostrum was in the range of 6.4 and 7.2 quarts. A few dams gave 2 quarts or less while 15 others yielded in nearly 3 gallons or more. While we can expect wide variations in yields many of the cows will fall in the range of 4 to 6.5 quarts.
3. Quality variation by volume: Knowing the volume is an unreliable guide to sorting out the lowest quality colostrum. Better to measure than guess.
4. Measuring antibody concentration: Better to measure than guess. A Colostrometer® measures specific gravity as a means of estimating antibody concentration. For a brief review of how to use this instrument including pictures click [HERE](#). A Brix refractometer measures solids level as a means of estimating antibody concentration. Look for a value of 22.0 or greater to show an antibody concentration of 50 mg/mL or greater. For a review on refractometer use click [HERE](#).

Ventilation – Managing Calf Barns [click [HERE](#)]

Calves need good quality air if they are going to be healthy. Ventilation management is essential to achieve this goal. The steps to go good management are:

- 1. Setting air quality goals and Measuring air quality – what to do**
- 2. Managing housing – if you are already meeting your goals right now.** Expect your air quality values to change. Therefore, be consistent in collecting information and recording it. Make changes in ventilation before you start treating sick calves.
- 3. Managing housing - when threshold values are not met.**

In naturally ventilated barns (usually less than 35 feet (10-11meters) wide, most often only two rows of pens) our challenges most often are how to: (1) open up the sides and ends of the barn without letting in too much precipitation and, (2) depending on the temperature, not creating excessive draftiness.

In mechanically ventilated barns I have observed that the most common cause of poor air quality is inadequate maintenance of ventilation controls and equipment.

For a table showing ventilation air exchange goals click [HERE](#).

Surges in Calvings: Responding Positively Rather than “Muddling Through” [click [HERE](#)]

1. Breeding records allow us to accurately predict sustained surges in calvings.
2. These sustained surges in calvings can overload the calf care system creating sub-standard care.
3. It is better to manage overloads rather than just “muddle through” and have compromised calf care.
4. Choose between decreasing the calf population, increasing resources or some combination of the two.

How Much Will Calves Drink? (Ad libitum milk intake by calves day 1 through 35) [click [HERE](#)]

1. When milk intake is not restricted expect calves to drink large amounts of milk.
2. Expect large variations among calves in milk consumption.
3. Expect significant changes in levels of milk intake from week-to-week.
4. In environments with significant parasite exposure, appetites tend to be depressed during infections.
5. Expressed as a percentage of live weight, milk consumption tends to go down as dairy heifer calves with free-choice milk, water and concentrate get past about three weeks of age.

This resource presents the intake levels in graphs showing highest, average and lowest levels of consumption as “quarts per day” and “percent of live weight” by day of age from 1 to 35 days of age.

Another resource - Calves with Sam blog – two or three times a week postings on interesting stuff related to calf management. Just Google “Calves with Sam” to access this.