

CALVING EASE

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Planning for Success: We Can Feed More without Scours

- Before increasing milk feeding rates know your current scours treatment rate.
- If it is 15 percent or more during the first 4 weeks of life take remedial measures to decrease your treatment rate before increasing feeding rates.
- There are 10 common differences between dairies that either do or do not have scours problems when feeding rates are increased.
- Plan for success – put your dairy in the “Low Scours Rate” column before increasing your milk feeding rate.

Gold Standards from the Dairy Calf and Heifer Association provide guidelines for mortality, morbidity and growth during the first six months of life. They suggest that scours treatment rates higher than 15 percent for the first two months of life are excessive. Counted as treatment is any intervention lasting over twenty-four hours. It is reasonable that treatment rates over 15 percent during the first four weeks of live are exceeding the threshold for profitable calf rearing.

What is the current rate of scours treatment?

This is not the easiest treatment to track. I used a 3” x 5” card for every day. Calves receiving electrolytes that day were noted. . With about one-hundred calves on milk I was able to use a calendar for a month to summarize the treatments. I only tracked a month in the spring and again in the fall – historically on this farm the highest treatment times.

I have seen record-keeping systems that used duct tape on calf pens with a black mark made on the tape each time electrolyte was fed. Anything that is easy to read and the calves cannot manage to eat will work.

What treatment rate is the right one for your dairy?

Ideally, we usually want our treatment rate this year to be lower than it was last year. That’s how I set my goals. Truthfully, I had some year-to-year backsliding. Yes, this year

was worse than the year before. In the long term my management did get better and the treatment rate did go down – never to zero.

What can we do to achieve lower rates so we can successfully adopt more aggressive feeding rates?

During my consulting over the past ten years or so I have been keeping a list of practices that seem to consistently distinguish dairies that are successful in aggressive milk feeding without high scours rates and dairies that just cannot feed more milk without wall-to-wall diarrhea.

These are summarized along with some commentary as “Feeding More Milk Without Scours.” See www.calffacts.com and click on this title or click [HERE](#).

The best management practices in this list include:

1. Milks fresh cows as soon as possible after calving, nearly all of them within six hours post-calving.
2. Checks colostrum quality and uses highest quality for first feeding.
3. Feeds colostrum as soon as possible after birth, always within first four hours.
4. Feed 3.5-4 quarts colostrum within first 4 hours (large breed)
5. Checks colostrum cleanliness with regular culturing.
6. Checks for successful passive transfer of immunity on a regular basis.
7. Cleans colostrum and milk handling equipment after every use following an accepted cleaning protocol that is written and posted.
8. Checks milk or milk replacer cleanliness with regular culturing.
9. Feeds preweaned calves enough milk or milk replacer to support at least one pound a day gain all seasons of the year.
10. Keeps calf housing clean.

It is good to get into the frame of mind that scours are not “normal.” Yes, we do have challenges with parasites like cryptosporidia that seem to be everywhere. Yes, we do have challenges of getting everyone on board following best management practices.

But, the rewards of fewer scours treatments are really great. Fewer calves need treatment. We are able to spend more time providing quality care for all the calves. And, because we are now able to feed more milk to encourage improved growth, more of our calves are doubling their weight in the first sixty days of life.

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 with Subscribe as the subject. Back issues may be accessed on the Internet at either www.atticacows.com or www.calfnotes.com and clicking on the link, Calving Ease.

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