

CALVING EASE

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Harvest the Benefits of Bio-Security Measures for Calf Facilities

- **Ask workers/visitors without a good reason to be near calves to stay away from the calf rearing area/building. [Bio-exclusion principle]**
- **If children (school class, grandkids) wish to visit calves, bring a calf to them; don't let them go into the calf rearing barn/area.**
- **As practical, reduce traffic in calf rearing areas by vehicles/farm machinery that are contaminated with adult cow manure.**
- **As practical, consider making it easy for employees that work with both cows and calves to have building-specific clothing and/or boots.**

Keep out what you can

Bio-exclusion refers to keeping out of a facility whatever you can. This is in contrast to cleaning up after contamination. One of the most obvious steps is to avoid traffic by persons who don't need to be in calf rearing areas/buildings.

Many of us do not have a lot of non-farm visitors. The ones that do show up at our calf barn most frequently are sales persons. Arrangements can be made (especially in this day of smart phones and texting) to meet off-site – maybe even to talk them into buying the coffee and donuts if we are smart in picking the place to meet! If they must visit the dairy be sure to have disposable boots, a place to put them on, a place to dispose of them and **hand sanitizer to use both after putting the disposable boots on and off.** [I prefer something like the Elas-a-Boot 6ml product.]

Much harder to manage is traffic by farm employees. Depending on our facility our calf utility room and calf housing may be quite unattractive – unheated, no place to park, no phone, no toilet, distant from other buildings and so on. On the other hand, maybe the calf facility is just the opposite and is a potential gathering place for a break. If practical, discourage employees from “just stopping” at the calf place.

Equipment can carry more adult cow manure than a person

A front-end loader or skid-steer can bring quite a load of adult cow manure even when the bucket is completely empty. A couple of tips:

1. Try to minimize trips through or near the calf rearing area with manure-loading equipment as well as manure spreaders/trucks.
2. As practical, consider hosing down loaders that have been used to load adult cow manure before going to clean calf pens or calf hutch areas – notice I did not even suggest power washing since I know that is highly unlikely.
3. Don't even consider power washing loaders at the calf rearing area even though there is a convenient concrete pad, water supply and power washer located there – just don't do it.

Some employees work with both cows and calves

Many farms have employees that work with both cows and calves. Or, at least have to visit both cow and calf barns in order to complete their daily work. What can we do to make it easy to use building-specific clothing and/or boots? That would cut down on the transmission of age-specific pathogens (especially adult cow manure related ones).

Some ideas that I have gleaned from experiences with North American dairies:

1. Provide a clean place to change clothes when arriving at and departing from work. A secure place for personal clothes and other belongings will promote compliance with this protocol.
2. Many dairies find it useful to provide a uniform service to encourage farm-specific clothing. Remember hats (ball caps) need to be changed, too. Hats with a farm logo are especially popular among employees.
3. Consider providing work overalls that will fit over cold weather clothing – for larger farms ones with the farm logo help with identifying outsiders that should not be at the calf rearing facility.
4. Provide comfortable foot wear (boots) for on-farm work. And, a place to change footwear. I recommend having a bench in a work room. Or, at least an extra pair of boots at each building where the employee works would encourage compliance.
5. As practical, have a concrete wash box on the work room floor with a drain, hose, long-handle brush to wash boots both when entering and leaving. A footbath next to this is workable if it is easy to dump and refill – anything similar to Tek-Trol or Virkon-S are good choices for the disinfectant.
6. As a last step before going to a calf building/area after changing clothes and boots, employees need to wash hands and arms. Or, for a person moving newborn calves, make hand sanitizer and disposable towels easy to use before handling the calves.
7. When workers move newborn calves from cow barns to a calf barn, encourage them to either change boots or pull on disposable ones & wash hands and arms.

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.

Our thanks to Merck Animal Health for supporting Calving Ease.

Remember to Google “Calves with Sam” blog for profit tips for calf rearing.