

Using CMT to Check Colostrum Quality

Step 1. Clean off udder

Remove accumulated bedding and junk from the cow's udder.

Step 2. Collect milk from each quarter

Using the CMT paddle, collect several squirts of milk from each quarter. The wells on the paddle will collect enough milk so that you can spot irregular milk.

For example, bloody milk will show up very well on the white paddle surface. Or, when you tip the paddle, mastitic ropes or clots will show up as the more fluid parts run off to one side.

If serious quality problems show up at this stage you have to decide how to exclude the low quality quarter or the entire lot of colostrum. **Do not feed to any calf.**

Step 3. Add reagent and observe

The next step is for cows without obvious quality problems. CMT reagent is added to the milk.

If after adding the reagent, the sample in the well has no or little color change and is still quite runny, the dam's infection level probably is not high enough to significantly contaminate the colostrum. Some increase in viscosity is expected with colostrum.

Or, does the sample in a well turn a distinct purple color and clot up like egg white? At this point, you have no reliable knowledge about what kind of infection is causing the high white blood cell concentration in the cow's udder.

The chances are high that the colostrum could be loaded with pathogens. **Don't feed this colostrum to a heifer calf.** If colostrum supplies are tight, it's probably better to use this for bull calves than not feeding them any colostrum at all.

Limitations – only the worst is eliminated. The CMT is not an accurate enough test on colostrum to do anything other than help us remove the very worst quality product from the feeding program.

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