

Calves and Bicycle Wheels

[Part 1 of a six-part series]

In a short provocative article Ryan Leiterman and Lorrie Meister (Crystal Creek Natural) make the case for considering every aspect of calf care (the spokes in the bicycle wheel) to optimize calf health and growth. A perfectly round wheel depends on all spokes being strong. When one or more of six key spokes become weak the chances of delivering well-grown, healthy calves goes down.

Let's look at Spoke Number 1 – Colostrum

The authors recommend evaluating the strength of this “spoke” using

- Brix refractometer – to assess quality of colostrum being fed.
- Colostrum cultures – to assess colostrum collection, storage and feeding.
- Blood serum total proteins – to assess utilization of colostrum feeding program.

If you are not using all three of these tests to evaluate your colostrum management program the risk of a weak “spoke” may be high.

I recommend:

1. Evaluate all of your colostrum for antibody concentration with a Brix refractometer – for more on this use this link <http://atticacows.com/library/newsletters/ColostrumRefractometerTestingR19119.pdf>
2. Regularly sample and culture your “as-fed” colostrum – a sampling protocol see <http://atticacows.com/library/newsletters/BacteriaQualityControlColostrumR1973B.pdf>. For standards to interpret coliform bacteria culture results see <http://atticacows.com/library/newsletters/ColostrumcoliformbacteriastandardsR1998.pdf>.
3. Regularly sample and evaluate blood serum total protein values to monitor the effectiveness of total colostrum management program. For more on how to do this see <http://atticacows.com/library/newsletters/TestPassiveTransferR1980.pdf>.

Reference: “Calves and bicycle wheels: A systematic approach to troubleshooting pre-weaned calves” by Ryan Leiterman and Lorrie Meister. Click [HERE](#) to go to the article or use this URL <https://crystalcreeknatural.com/comparing-calves-to-bicycle-wheels-a-systematic-approach-to-troubleshooting-pre-weaned-calves/#more-8192>