

Clean Wholesome Colostrum: Checklist

What are the long-standing rules for colostrum feeding? We all know them. Feed plenty of good quality colostrum as soon as possible after birth. But, if we only measure colostrum quality in terms of antibody concentration we have overlooked a critical characteristic. **Colostrum must not be contaminated with bacteria.** Use this checklist to see how well your dairy is doing.

1. When appropriate, we use an effective dry-treat product when the cows are dried off. That helps reduce colonization of the udder with environmental bacteria in the critical ten days when she is first dried off. We recommend using a teat sealant at dry-off on all cows.
2. If environmental mastitis is a persistent farm problem, we vaccinate cows with one of the specially designed vaccines aimed at this problem.
3. We keep the pre-fresh housing well bedded the last ten days before calving. That is one of the highest risk times for environmental bacteria to invade the udder.
4. We use good udder preparation procedures in the parlor when colostrum is collected. Always using the “dip-wipe-dip-wipe-scrub” protocol.
5. We use recommended sanitation procedures for colostrum collection and storage equipment.
6. **We have colostrum samples cultured for bacteria periodically to be sure the sanitation procedures are working.**
7. Any colostrum that is not immediately fed, we chill as soon as possible to prevent bacterial growth (to 60°F or 16°C). With some environmental bacterial doubling in numbers every twenty minutes at 102°F or 39°C, this is an essential step in preserving the cleanliness of colostrum.
8. When we warm stored colostrum to feeding temperature, we feed it right away. When colostrum is rewarmed, the bacteria start multiplying again. At 102°F they double in numbers every twenty minutes that feeding is delayed.

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