

COLOSTRUM FEEDING CHECKLIST

How do your procedures measure up? Do they provide the opportunity for your calves to grow into their genetic potential?

Let's consider procedures for feeding colostrum. Compare your routines with the standards in this checklist. When making this evaluation I like to use these scores:

1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=usually, and 5=almost always.

- _____ 1. All feeding equipment that comes in contact with colostrum is scrubbed after every use. This means both inside and outside surfaces.
- _____ 2. When periodically cultured for bacteria, colostrum as fed to calves is not contaminated with environmental bacteria. This reduces the risk of septicemia and scours. Also, very highly contaminated colostrum may substantially reduce the rate of antibody transfer.
- _____ 3. Colostrum contaminated with mastitis and blood is dumped.
- _____ 4. Colostrum quality (antibody concentration) is estimated and the best quality available fed to heifer calves. While only a very rough guide to quality, a Colostrometer® or Brix refractometer may be used to exclude the lowest quality colostrum. Feeding more poor quality colostrum is not an effective substitute for a good quality product.
- _____ 5. Colostrum is fed to heifer calves no more than four hours after birth and to at least half of the heifer calves within one hour of birth. About half of a heifer's ability to absorb antibodies is gone within six hours.
- _____ 6. Plenty of clean good quality colostrum is fed. Average and large calves are fed four litres within the first six hours. Smaller calves are fed proportionately less but still more than two litres.
- _____ 7. When only low quality colostrum (low antibody concentration) is available, either an effective colostrum supplement is fed to boost antibody content or a colostrum replacer is fed instead of the colostrum.
- _____ 8. When a colostrum replacer is fed, if there is low antibody colostrum available it is also fed within six hours of birth to provide additional energy.
- _____ 9. When possible, fresh or refrigerated colostrum (one or two days old) is fed rather than frozen colostrum. Thus, the calf gets a full dose of maternal immune cells as well as the maternal antibodies.

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