

COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

1. Is it clean?

Collect a sample just as the colostrum is being fed to a calf. Send it with the milk truck driver to a lab recommended by your veterinarian. Ask the lab to quantify the bacteria (Standard Plate Count or SPC).

The results usually come back as the number of colony forming units per milliliter (cfu/ml). If the SPC is above 5,000, re-sample and send the colostrum to a laboratory that can both speciate (what kinds) and quantify (count). For coliform count standards go to www.calfacts.com see “Colostrum: Coliform bacteria standards for calf health.”

Or, after 2 days in your refrigerator, check several bottles of colostrum. The presence of off odors signals high bacteria levels. Never feed bacteria to a newborn calf.

2. Is it fed early enough?

Are 50 percent of your newborns fed colostrum within 1 hour after birth? And, 80 percent within 2 hours after birth?

Every half-hour delay in colostrum feeding may cut a calf's chances of being healthy by 5 percent!

3. Is it rich in antibodies?

Not all colostrum is full of life-sustaining antibodies. One way to check antibody concentration is a Colostrometer® [click [HERE](#) for use guidelines] or a Brix refractometer [click [HERE](#) for use guidelines].

Colostrum from 1 out of 3 cows is likely to have an inadequate antibody concentration. Unless heifers have an aggressive vaccination program, 2 out of 3 heifers is likely give colostrum with an inadequate antibody concentration.

4. Is enough colostrum being fed?

If clean, antibody-rich colostrum is being fed, are you getting 4 quarts fed within the first 6 hours? A good strategy is to feed 2 quarts immediately and 2 more quarts at 4 to 6 hours later.

If clean colostrum of unknown antibody content is being fed, are you getting 4 quarts fed immediately? If the quality is unknown, one way to cover the risk of poor quality is to feed more sooner.

If the colostrum is contaminated with bacteria throw it away. Clean second or third milking from a fresh cow is better than colostrum that has turned into bacteria soup! Or, a colostrum replacer may be fed.

RATE YOURSELF

	YES	NO
1. Checked colostrum bacteria count in this year.	___	___
2. Four out of 5 calves get first feeding of colostrum within 2 hours after birth.	___	___
3. Colostrum is sorted by antibody concentration and the best is fed to heifer calves.	___	___
4. Four out of 5 calves are fed 4 qts. of colostrum within 6 hours after birth.	___	___

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For Calves with Sam blog go to dairycalfcare.blogspot.com

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