

Calf Care Consistency Checklist

How do your procedures measure up? Do they provide the opportunity for your calves to grow into their genetic potential? Calves less than three weeks of age most urgently need consistency in their care. That time from birth to three weeks is when they transition from passive immunity to that which they make on their own.

Let's consider procedures for calf care. Compare your routines with the standards that follow. Try using these scores: 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=usually, and 5=almost always.

- _____ 1. We use a minimum number of persons to care for the calves. If more than one person works each shift, consider dividing the calves into care groups with one person assigned to the same group all the time. The goal is to have the same person caring for the same calves as much as possible.
- _____ 2. We use the same routine for feeding bottles or buckets each feeding. Our goal is to present the feed consistently. The same racks are used all the time. If we have tethered calves, we approach and handle the calves consistently.
- _____ 3. We feed calves at the same time each day. A few minutes either way is not an issue. However, variations over thirty minutes should be examined to see if greater consistency could be achieved.
- _____ 4. We feed milk/milk replacer at the same temperature every feeding. The preferred feeding temperature is 102°, the same as calf body temperature.
- _____ 5. We feed the same amount of milk/milk replacer every feeding. A cup (4 ounces) either way is not an issue. However, variations over that should be examined to see if greater consistency could be achieved. When increases are required by a protocol, they are made gradually in small steps.
- _____ 6. We limit the amount of variation in milk solids and composition of the milk/milk replacer part of the ration to the extent that it is possible.
- _____ 7. We provide free-choice water every day. During freezing weather when we must dump pails to prevent ice, water is fed at the same time each day. The preferred feeding temperature, especially for calves less than two weeks old, is 102°, the same as calf body temperature.
- _____ 8. We provide free-choice, clean and fresh calf starter grain daily. During warm and/or damp weather, contents of grain containers are changed often enough to avoid wet and/or moldy grain consistently.

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

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