

DIPPING NAVELS: Dollars and Sense

Net Profit per 100 cows is \$3,142. (Given heifer calf valued at \$300)

Benefits

- **Lower death loss** – Calves without navel disinfection (navel dipping with 7% tincture of iodine solution) have a higher death loss rate than those that are disinfected (Dipped calves = 7 percent death loss, not-dipped calves = 18 percent death loss). Given this difference, for every 100 cows that means an extra eleven deaths among heifer calves. **The value of extra death losses avoided due to properly disinfecting navels at birth, depending on the replacement value of a heifer calf come to per 100 cows: @\$200 = \$2,200, @\$300 = \$3,300, @\$400 = \$4,400.**
- **Lower rate of treatment for pneumonia** – Calves without navel disinfection have a 14 percent higher rate of treatable pneumonia than those that are disinfected. For every 100 cows, that means treating an extra 4 calves. Including drug and labor costs, **that comes to \$30 per 100 cows in extra treatment costs avoided due to properly disinfecting navels at birth.**
- **Lower rate of treatment for navel infections** – A NY state study showed that only 12 percent of navel infections were diagnosed and treated by farm personnel – the other 88 percent diagnosed by study technician were left undiagnosed and untreated. Thus, the savings from not treating navel infections is probably negligible.
- **Total savings per 100 cows when a calf is worth \$300 is \$3,330.**

Costs

- **Navel dip.** The recommended dip is 7 percent tincture of iodine solution. This is a brown, alcohol solution that both dries the tissue and kills germs. Assuming about 3 ounces (89ml) of dip is used to dip each navel

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twice, then when navel dip cost US\$51/gallon (128oz) the cost per calf is \$1.20. **That comes to about \$120 per 100 cows.**

- **Labor for dipping** – Assuming \$10/hour and 5 minutes to dip each calf, then the cost per calf is about \$0.83. **That comes to about \$38 per 100 cows.**
- **Total cost per 100 cows = \$158**

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Of interest may be the resource on what are considered normal and abnormal navels – go to www.calffacts.com, scroll down to Navels: What is normal and abnormal?

Reference: Table 2. Effect of disinfecting vs. not disinfecting navels on calf mortality and health. University of Wisconsin Calf Survival Study. Feed Management Vol. 51, No. 2 pg. 22. Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll down to Dipping Navels Graph. A.M. Virtala, G. D. Mechor, Y.T. Grohn and H.N. Erb, “The effect of calfhood diseases on growth of female dairy calves during the first 3 months of life in New York State.” Journal of Dairy Science 79:1040-1049.