

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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Interested in the resource on what are considered normal and abnormal navels? – go to www.calffacts.com, click on the Resource drop-down menu, click on Calf Facts and scroll to Navels: What's 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. Click [HERE](#) to open a Word document showing a graph comparing mortality between calves with and without navel disinfection. A.M. Virtala, G. D. Mechor, Y.T. Grohn and H.N. Erb, “The effect of calfhoo 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.