

ACCELERATED PREWEANED CALF FEEDING PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Are you deciding whether or not to try an accelerated feeding program for preweaned calves? Here are four key questions. They need to be answered, “Yes,” before jumping into an accelerated feeding program. They deal with

- (1) Water,
- (2) Newborn Calf Management,
- (3) Feeding Milk Replacer, and
- (4) Feeding Equipment Sanitation.

- Water – Am I already feeding ad-lib water or can I get set up to do so?

Fact #1. Providing ad-lib water is not an option for accelerated calf feeding programs - it is a must not only for efficient feed conversion rates, but also for calf health and survival.

Fact #2. For calf hutches in non-freezing weather plan on adding up to one minute per day per calf to present feeding times if you are not already providing ad-lib water (unless automated watering). In freezing weather, double that time.

In calf barns or other housing with where one does not have to carry the water to the calves, about one-half these times may be added to present feeding times.

Fact #3. Plan on delivering at least 3.5 to 4L of water for each 500g of concentrate consumed.

Fact #4. Unpalatable water is not the same as ad-lib water.

- Newborn Management – Is this already four-star quality?

Fact #1. The navel opening and umbilical cord on every calf must be dipped at birth with tincture of iodine.

Fact #2. The colostrum management (dry cow vaccination, colostrum collection, storage, feeding) must support blood serum total proteins of at least 80 % at 5.5 or more and 90% at 5.2 or more.

For more information on blood serum total protein testing go to www.calffacts.com, click on “Metric Calf Facts Library” and scroll down to “Testing for Passive Immunity.”

Fact #3. No manure meals. Calves are removed from the calving area before they get adult cow manure in their mouths from the bedding, dam or any other source.

- Feeding Milk Replacer – Am I already feeding variable amounts of milk replacer or can I get set up to do so?

Fact #1. All accelerated calf-feeding protocols recommend increasing the amount fed as the calf grows larger.

Fact #2. Not all calves will respond equally to the same feeding challenge. Some calves at the same age may need to be fed different volumes of milk replacer.

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Fact #3. The health status of calves may require variable feeding rates.

- Feeding Equipment Hygiene – How well does my hygiene program reduce the pathogens calves drink with their food?

Fact #1. Residual environmental bacteria (for example, *E. coli*), finding favorable growth conditions on milk feeding equipment, may cause bacterial scours.

Fact #2. Parasites (especially Cryptosporidia) if not washed off equipment spread from calf to calf.

Fact #3. Just as important as pre-wash rinsing and washing are the steps of rinsing with acid (lower pH) and drying feeding equipment.

If you are going to invest in an accelerated feeding program it makes sense to keep track of your growth rates, too. Either weigh scales or a heart-girth tape will work. Weigh going into calf housing and at a consistent second time (for example, at weaning or just before moving to new housing).

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