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# AVA NEWSLETTER

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116 Prospect St., Attica, NY  
(585) 591-2660  
[www.atticacows.com](http://www.atticacows.com)

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## Drying off a Calf



What about in weather where the environment will not supply warm enough air to dry off the newborn calf? Then the calf's energy reserves are used to supply the heat. What about the times when we are trying to control dam-to-daughter transmission of disease. Johne's disease is a good example. Doing the "drying" job is up to the care givers.

### **How dry is "dry"?**

We advise folks to aim for "fluff" dry. Fluff means that the hair stands erect, not lying flat against the body. Thus we get the stationary blanket of insulating air even though the individual hairs are not fully dry.

### **Towels and their care**

Clean dry towels work great. I lean toward the all-cotton towels for drying with the least amount of effort on my part. They seem to be the most absorbent. These towels are inexpensive at the dollar-type stores. Caution - the colors run like crazy the first few times these inexpensive towels are washed – so don't mix them with anything where color makes a difference. And, they tend to shrink a fair amount the first time they go through the dryer but, then, who cares?

Plan on washing the towels after every use. When it comes to using towels around amniotic fluids and calving pens don't even think about multiple uses. We are trying to limit exposure to pathogens rather than insure that every calf gets an infective dose of a whole army of them.

How many towels do we need? Plan on at least four bath-size towels for every birth where the care giver starts with a soaking wet calf.

For farms drying many calves the best organization system I have seen used good sized plastic bins to store towels.

### **Drying the calf**

At first thought it does not seem as though much is involved in drying off a calf. Connect towel and calf. Rub. That is true. However, let's think about what we are trying to accomplish. The calf needs to get breathing well. Her circulation needs to be stimulated. Within roughly thirty minutes she needs to stand up. And, by the way, we need to get her dry.

I recommend giving first attention to breathing. Clear airways as needed. Roll the calf on to her belly. This belly down position promotes full inflation of the lungs. Then, go at it with the first towel. Concentrate on her neck and shoulders since this will contribute the most to getting her breathing well on her own. Getting her head cleaned off and dry will help, too.

Once we have her breathing well then I doubt if it makes any difference where we go from there. Be vigorous in your rubbing. Our aim is to stimulate circulation.

Now when the calf has a fluff-dry coat and is standing it is time for her first meal. I prefer to feed this first meal with her standing than having her lying down. The standing position with a slightly raised head takes advantage of gravity as the calf is swallowing. If the calf cannot stand always remember to keep her on her belly when she is fed.



**POLAR PLUNGE**™

Freezin' For A Reason

**The Special Olympics' Polar Plunge is quickly approaching. It is time again for the brave to take on the challenge of the freezing temperatures of Lake Ontario.**

**If you would like to donate to this great fundraiser, stop in or call the clinic and ask us how.**

## **PROPER ADMINISTRATION OF FLUNIXIN (BANAMINE) CAN HELP YOU AVOID RESIDUES IN MEAT AND MILK**

Flunixin (also known as banamine or flunixinamine) is approved for intravenous (IV) use in cattle for the control of inflammation and fever. There is a meat and milk hold out for animals treated with this product. Unfortunately, you may not be aware of any of this information if you are not in the habit of reading the label on the bottle.

Flunixin is a very effective product and widely used on many dairy farms. Unfortunately, it is also often administered incorrectly resulting in it's being in the top two residue violations identified in cull dairy cows nationwide. The high number of flunixin residues are likely related to the administration of the drug by unapproved routes. The route of administration (IV vs. SQ-subcutaneous/under the skin or IM-intramuscular) can affect the time it takes that drug to be cleared from the body and thereby dramatically prolong the meat and milk hold out required.

Before you give any medication, you should always read the label or speak to your veterinarian. The labels will not only help you identify the correct amount and interval that the drug should be given but will also inform you of the correct route (IV,SQ,IM) as well as any required meat and milk hold out.

If for some reason you cannot read the label or the label is missing please refer to your product handbook or contact the clinic. If you do not already have a product/drug handbook we would be happy to provide you with a free copy. These handbooks offer a quick and easy reference guide for the most commonly used products. If you have any further questions about residue avoidance please contact your veterinarian.

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