

Monitoring Calf Care: Goals and Recommended Thresholds

1. Newborn care and feeding colostrum:

- Quarterly – draw blood from all heifer calves between 2 and 7 days of age on herd-check day.
- Goals for blood serum total protein values are 90 percent 5.2 and greater, 80 percent 5.5 and greater. [Dairy Calf & Heifer Association, 2016]
- Quarterly – summarize the number of new navel infections requiring treatment.
- Goal for navel infections is less than 10 percent.

2. Colostrum collection and storage:

- Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of colostrum and culture for bacteria. For a collecting protocol go to www.calffacts.com and scroll to “Bacteria Control: Collecting Colostrum Samples” [Spanish version available].
- Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria and less than 50,000 cfu/ml standard plate count.

3. Cleaning milk feeding equipment:

- Quarterly – collect rinse samples from (a) nursing bottle and nipple, (b) esophageal tube feeder, and (c) buckets used to store colostrum and milk replacer mixing and feeding. Culture samples for bacteria. For a collecting protocol go to www.calffacts.com and scroll to “Bacteria Control: Collecting sterile water samples.
- Goal is less than 1,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria and less than 5,000 standard plate count.
- Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of milk replacer and culture for bacteria. For a collecting protocol go to www.calffacts.com

and scroll to “Bacterial Control: Collecting Milk/milk replacer samples.

- **Goal is less than 1,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria and less than 5,000 cfu/ml standard plate count.**

4. Calf growth rates:

- **Within the first three days of life, using a heart girth weight tape, estimate birth weights. For a picture guide on using a tape click [HERE](#) and scroll to page three “Weighing in on weight tapes.”**
If a large number of calves per year need to be weighed select a smaller number – for example, for about 100 calves per year just tape all even numbered calves.
For 500 calves per year or more just tape all the calves with numbers ending in 0 and 5.
- **Using the same tape and person, estimate weaning weights of all calves taped at birth.**
- **Quarterly – summarize the amount of weight gained by these calves and estimate average daily gain.**
- **Goal is at least 1.7 pounds average daily gain at 56 days.**

Note: When estimating rates of gain it is not appropriate to assume birth weights. In a study including over 1,000 heifer calves from two herds only two-thirds of the calves fell within a range of 20 pounds around the average. That means that fully one-third of the calves had birth weights more than ten pounds different than the mean.

An additional resource on goals and thresholds that uses the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) procedures go to www.calffacts.com and scroll to “Managing Calf Diseases: HACCP method.”

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

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