

CALVING EASE

December 2013

Sam Leadley, Attica Veterinary Associates

The Calf Kitchen

- A dedicated space, calf kitchen, can improve efficiency of milk/milk replacer handling.
- A dedicated cleaning area, a single or double sink, can improve cleaning protocol compliance resulting in lower levels of bacteria in milk/milk replacer.
- A calf kitchen can improve our consistency of calf feeding; especially level of bacterial contamination, dry matter content, temperature and timing.

Kitchen for calves? Kitchen in the barn? What sort of nonsense is this? It does sound a bit strange to suggest a calf kitchen. But, stop and think about what is needed to do a good job of caring for calves.

Why a Kitchen?

In the home we use the kitchen, as different from other rooms, primarily to store and prepare food. A well-organized kitchen makes it easy to access food ingredients and allows efficient food preparation. In addition, this is the place where most households store their cooking and eating equipment. Cleaning is done here, too.

Why a “kitchen” for calves?

Think about day-to-day care for preweaned dairy calves. We deliver about fifteen pounds of feed per calf per day. Of that feed, roughly 87 percent (milk or milk replacer) comes out of the “kitchen.” Thus, for every 100 calves we are moving about 1,300 pounds of food through our kitchen daily. We need:

- Easy access to ingredients
- Efficient feed preparation
- Efficient handling of finished product
- Efficient storage of equipment
- Convenience in cleaning

Dietary needs of our calves

- Milk replacer prepared at the same dry matter consistency every feeding.
- Milk, milk replacer delivered at the same temperature every feeding (about 102F).

- Milk, milk replacer delivered in the same volume every feeding.
- Milk, milk replacer available for feeding at the same times every day.
- Milk, milk replacer contains minimal levels of bacterial contamination.

Characteristics of a “good” kitchen

The ideal kitchen space is dedicated to calf care. At least there is not competition for space when it is the time of day to prepare for calf feeding.

Then, let’s start with a good, solid floor that is easy to keep clean. Water on the floor should run to a drain that works. Then, we need an adequate supply of water, both hot and cold.

A stainless steel sink (either single or double) with racks for drying equipment are essential to encourage everyone to follow cleaning protocols. Trying to clean bottles, tube feeders and pails working out of a five-gallon pail sitting on the floor is a recipe for disaster. For a practical washing protocol see www.calffacts.com and scroll to “Washing milk containers.”

Plan on a place for the brushes needed for manual equipment cleaning as well as protective hand gloves. I always slipped on a protective water-proof apron when washing up. A rapid-read thermometer is advised for checking wash water temperature.

If we are feeding pasteurized milk there needs to be easy access to our raw milk holding tank and pump. This allows convenient supervision of the milk transfer to our pasteurizer. Also, we want this tank and pump arranged in a way that it is easy to keep them clean.

If we are feeding milk replacer [usually 130 to 180 pounds of powder per 100 calves per day] we want easy access to our milk powder – convenient storage of bags and access to them. If we use less than whole bags of powder, we should have ready access to a scale for measuring powder – much more accurate than measuring by volume.

If we are using less than full bags of milk powder our kitchen should have a dry sanitary place to store this powder. I recommend a plastic waste barrel lined with a contractor-grade plastic bag with a tight lid – dump the powder into this container and get rid of the dirty paper bag.

Additives for milk/milk replacer need to have a space, also. Examples might be a coccidiostat (for example Corid, Deccox-M), a nutritional supplement like oligosaccharides (for example, Bio-Mos, OligoPro). These may be moisture-sensitive so having a dry place for them is important.

If you know of someone that doesn’t currently receive **Calving Ease** but would like to, tell them to **WRITE** to **Calving Ease**, 11047 River Road, Pavilion, NY 14525 or to **CALL** 585-591-2660 (Attica Vet Assoc. office) or **FAX** (585-591-2898) or **e-mail** calvingease@rochester.rr.com with Subscribe as the subject. Back issues may be accessed on the Internet at either www.atticacows.com or www.calffnotes.com and clicking on the link, Calving Ease.

Our thanks to Merck Animal Health for supporting Calving Ease.