

Hygiene and Standard Operating Procedures

Every calf raiser knows that keeping calves healthy is neither simple nor easy. When pathogens to which calves are exposed “out weigh” the immune resources, calves get clinically ill. This outline focuses on the subtracting from the pathogen side of this pathogen:immunity equation through hygiene procedures – keeping stuff clean!

Primary pathogen exposure points

The four primary pathogen exposure points for newborn and preweaned calves are (1) the calving pen, (2) calf housing, (3) colostrum, and (4) milk/milk replacer. By systematically identifying the primary pathogens at each of these exposure points a producer can select the most effective hygiene procedures to reduce pathogens in calves’ environment.

Work-site protocols

Work-site protocols can be developed jointly by management and employees to cover primary hygiene procedures. These protocols provide not only a working guide to day-to-day task performance but they also serve as a training tool. Both new hires and experienced staff need to be familiar with all the steps in a job and their proper sequence.

Monitoring compliance with hygiene protocols

Monitoring compliance with hygiene protocols is essential for an effective and efficient calf rearing operation. Everyone eventually drifts away from protocol-specified behaviors. The need for and focus of retraining efforts should come from on-the-job observations. All departures from protocols should not be considered in a negative light. Some deviations might represent innovations that could be used to improve a protocol.

For a more complete description of these main topics go to www.calfacts.com and select files “Standard Operating Procedures,” “Monitoring Compliance with Standard Operating Procedures,” and “Sanitation Procedures: Selecting for Calf Enterprise.”