

ACTUS NUTRITION

Animal Nutrition

Technical Calf Care Tips

Colostrum Management



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As an industry there is no dispute on the importance of colostrum management. This article covers some ways to ensure the successful passive transfer of immunity through proper colostrum management.

Colostrum collection protocols should be posted clearly in the maternity pen. The protocols should be in all languages that the members of the team can read. The calf team at Actus Nutrition is available to assist in protocol development.

It is also important to conduct regular training on colostrum protocols. We recommend regular training as protocol drift is very common. We also recognize employee turnover can be high and colostrum management training can be overlooked.

The goal should be to feed colostrum as soon after birth as possible. Colostrum must be given with in the first 6 hours of life. We know that gut closure begins at 6 hours, and absorption will rapidly decrease at this point.



When harvesting colostrum cleanliness is key! Harvesting colostrum should be done with the same sanitation protocols as milking. We can monitor cleanliness of colostrum by running a TPC and Coliform check on colostrum. Checking TPC and Coliforms is helpful when troubleshooting scours outbreaks on farm.

Dairy Calf and Heifer Gold Standards for colostrum are:

> **Fresh Colostrum:**
> TPC: <50,000 CFU/ML
> Coliforms: <5,000 CFU/ML
>
> **Heat treated Colostrum:**
> TPC: <20,000 CFU/ML
> Coliform: <100 CFU/ML

The quality of Igg in colostrum and be checked on farm using a Brix. Dairy Calf and Heifer Gold Standard recommend greater than 22%. If the Brix reading is less than 22% we can use a commercially available colostrum supplement. The calf team at Actus is available to work with your team on how to balance your colostrum if you see low Brix values.

Temperature at delivery is also very important. The ideal temperature to feed colostrum is between 90F and 110F. Feeding colostrum below 90F results in colostrum being poorly absorbed. Feeding colostrum above 110F may burn the calf or cause irritation to the esophagus.

One gallon of colostrum should be given at the first feeding. It is easiest to use an esophageal feeder to ensure the calf receives the entire gallon of colostrum. It is extremely important to have proper technique when tube feeding calves.Improper placement of the tube can result in the colostrum going into the lungs resulting in pneumonia.

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