

ACTUS NUTRITION

Animal Nutrition

Success in This Crazy Dairy-Beef Market

Strategies to Maximizes Growth and Survival in Dairy-Beef Calves

FROM THE MAKERS OF ENERGY BOOSTER AND RPM ET™

It is well known that the economics behind crossbred dairy beef calves are at a historical high. Many producers are stretching operating loans just to purchase calves. The challenge is to find ways to increase profit in any way possible to overcome purchase prices. There are several ways to increase profit within dairy-beef calf operations. At the end of the day, it is as simple as decreasing morbidity and mortality while increasing ADG. Below we will cover a few ways to achieve this goal.

When calves arrive at the calf-raising facility, we should re-dip the navels with 7% tincture of iodine.Calves encounter bacteria during transportation, and navels can be a prime source of infection. Re-dipping on arrival helps decrease bacterial load from entering the navel.

Electrolytes are a cost-effective tool to improve calf performance. Calves that have been long-hauled or hauled during heat can benefit from feeding electrolytes on arrival and midday for the first 7 days.This will not only correct any dehydration, but when using the proper electrolyte, it can also help correct metabolic acidosis that the calf could be experiencing. Choosing the correct electrolyte can be confusing. Dr. Geoff Smith has a running list of requirements and common electrolytes on the market. This list can be found on AABP's website. General recommendations are:

- Sodium: 90-130 mmol/L
- Chloride: 40-80 mmol/L
- Potassium: 10-30 mmol/L
- Alkalinizing agents: preferred acetate and or propionate (min 50 mmol/L total)
- Osmolality: under 500-600 mOsm/L

It is important to remember to never mix electrolytes with milk replacer, as it will increase the osmolality and can cause scours. Ensure that electrolyte feeding and milk feeding are separated by a minimum of 2 hours.

IgG supplementation for 10-14 days at 10g/head/day can be effective for decreasing morbidity and mortality. There are several ways to achieve this with products on the market. Choosing a colostrum supplement that is derived from bovine colostrum will supply the desired 10 g/head/day should be the goal. Plasma is another effective way to get IgG into the milk replacer.

When it comes to success in raising dairy beef calves, we should never overlook the basics. Calves should always have access to clean, fresh water from the time of arrival through weaning. We need to offer a high-quality starter grain that is separate from the water bucket. Grain should be changed daily to ensure that it is palatable.We can save on wasted feed by offering only a handful of starter grain per day until the calf begins to consume it.This keeps the feed fresh and minimizes waste. There is no replacement for adequate bedding. Seasonal changes in bedding can prove helpful. Straw is a great option in the winter as it offers more thermal value. Straw is a poor choice in the summer due to its contribution to fly reproduction, and calves cannot thermoregulate as easily with straw. In the summer months sawdust or sand are a better option.

The above management practices will aid in decreasing morbidity and mortality. There has never been a better time to revisit your management protocols to ensure you are capitalizing on the max amount of profit. At Actus Animal Nutrition, we have a team of calf specialists that are willing and available to assist with this process.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST



Elizabeth Douglass
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