

## HYGIENE PROTOCOLS AT CALVING



### INTRODUCTION

Maintaining good hygiene in the calving shed can lower the risk of illness and improve cow and calf survival. Although bacteria are present everywhere, farms can reduce the spread of bacteria by undertaking protocols in calving sheds.

### PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

Calving sheds should be cleaned out and limed/disinfected prior to the next batch of cows/heifers coming in. Water troughs should also be cleaned out regularly. Remember, if you take a cup of water from a water trough and wouldn't drink it yourself then it is an indicator that the trough is too dirty for your cows. At housing, separate any cows that are lame and treat promptly to avoid the spread of infection and pen them away from the main calving herd. Maintaining clean, comfortable and dry bedding reduces the risk of infection. After every cow and calf has left a calving pen, this should be cleaned, disinfected and new bedding provided to ensure that infection is not passed onto the next couple.

When assisting any calving, disposable gloves should always be worn to reduce the risk of internal infection. Removing any sick cows and calves into a separate designated area means that they can be easily treated and monitor how much they eat and drink. To stop the spread of infection, afterbirth and placentas should be disposed of immediately.



Providing staff with warm water, soap and towels near a calving shed is vitally important as many of the bacteria's found during calving time can also cause serious illness in people. All farms should provide disinfectant stations on entrances of sheds to ensure that diseases are not passed between livestock types and humans.

Together with the mouth, the navel offers bacteria a convenient point of entry. Iodine treatment for navels lowers this danger and aids in the navel's drying out. Dipping them twice a few hours apart is best recommended.



If calves are required to be tubed or bottle fed, ensure that all feeding equipment, such as stomach tubes, teats and milk feeders are thoroughly sterilised in between uses. Using a baby bottle sterilising solution is highly recommended by vets.

### SUMMARY

- Pens should always be disinfected
- Clean water troughs regularly
- Maintain clean, comfortable and dry bedding
- Remove any sick cows/calves into separate pens
- Provide staff with warm water, soap and towels
- Use iodine treatments for navels lowers the risk of bacterial infection

### CONTACT

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# IMPORTANCE OF COLOSTRUM AT CALVING



## COLOSTRUM IS GOLD

The 3 Q's of Feeding Colostrum:

1. Quantity
2. Quality
3. Quickly

Colostrum is vital to newborn calves as it contains antibodies (also known as immunoglobulins or IgG) to provide immunity, and it is also rich in essential nutrients to provide energy for growth.

Newborn calves should receive at least 3 litres of colostrum within the first 2 hours of birth, followed by a further 3 litres within 12 hours of birth. Dependent on the breed, this should be split for smaller breeds. Calves that absorb sufficient immunoglobulins in the correct time frame after birth are significantly healthier with a higher rate of survival. Calves which fail to get adequate transfer of immunity from colostrum are 1.5 times more likely to get scour, 1.8 times as likely to get pneumonia and twice as likely to die.



Calves that are left to suckle from their mother are 2.4 times less likely to receive sufficient antibodies. Research completed by AHDB shows that some calves are at greater risk of insufficient quality and quantity of colostrum, these include bull calves, twin calves, calves born to a heifer and calves with assisted delivery.

Good quality colostrum contains at least 50 g/L of IgG however colostrum below 35 g/L should not be used. Testing the colostrum with a refractometer ensures farmers that adequate colostrum is being provided to calves in the most vital stage of life. A calves ability to absorb antibodies starts to decline rapidly after first feeding.

Providing additional colostrum over several days allows a calf to build immunity and fight any early infections. Ensure that cows are tested for Johne's disease before giving colostrum to reduce the risk of spreading disease. It is recommended to store colostrum for 2 days at 4 degrees Celsius because a higher temperature may lead to an increase in bacterial contamination and decreased absorption of IgG. Frozen colostrum can be stored between -18 and -25 degrees Celsius for at least a year before quality change. If you are using frozen colostrum from pooled cows then this should be thawed slowly in warm water and fed to calves at 38 degrees Celsius (their body temperature).



## WHY IS COLOSTRUM IMPORTANT FOR CALVES?

- It provides passive immunity through the antibodies it contains
- It acts as a laxative and helps to clean out the digestive tract
- It provides the early nutrients required for a healthy life
- Ensures calves get the best possible start

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