Cold Weather Calf Care Checklist

Are you using effective cold weather calf care procedures? Do they provide the opportunity for your employees to provide quality calf care?

Let's consider your cold weather calf care procedures. Compare your actions with the standards in this checklist. When making this evaluation I like to use these scores: 1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=usually, and 5=almost always.

_____ 1. I feed all calves at least 4 quarts of high quality, clean colostrum no later than 6 hours after birth. (Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll to "Colostrum: Feeding Checklist" for more on feeding colostrum.)

_____ 2. For calves consuming primarily a liquid ration, I feed enough milk/milk replacer appropriate to the environmental temperature to provide enough energy for both maintenance and at least one pound per day growth. (Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll to "Cold Weather and Energy for Calves" for a chart showing how much energy is used for maintenance.)

_____ 3. For calves on a combination liquid and calf starter ration, I feed free-choice calf starter grain. (Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll to "Starter Grain Feeding Checklist" for more on feeding starter grain.)

_____ 4. I provide free-choice water to all calves in both non-freezing and freezing weather. (Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll to "Water: Feeding Preweaned Calves" for more on feeding water to preweaned calves.)

_____ 5. During cold weather, I dry calf hair coats at birth enough to fluff in order to reduce evaporation heat losses. (Go to www.calffacts.com, scroll to "Drying Off a Calf" for a drying protocol.)

_____ 6. During cold weather in calf barns, I provide adequate air exchange (15 cfm/min/calf) without creating drafts on individual calves. Click HERE and scroll down to "Calf and Heifer Facilities" to go to calf facility resources from Cornell University

_____ 7. In all housing in cold weather, I keep an adequate layer of dry bedding underneath calves to insulate them from a cold base. Much of the insulation value of bedding is lost when it is wet. Wet bedding can have three times the heat loss as dry bedding.

_____ 8. In all housing in cold weather, I control convection losses either by adequate soft bedding to allow "nesting" and/or by the use of calf blankets.

Sam Leadley, Calf & Heifer Management Specialist
smleadley@yahoo.com www.atticacows.com
For Calves with Sam blog go to dairycalfcare.blogspot.com