

COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

1. Is it clean?

Collect a sample just as the colostrum is being fed to a calf. Send it to a lab recommended by your veterinarian. Ask the lab to quantify the bacteria by species (Standard Plate Count or SPC).

The results usually come back as the number of colony forming units per milliliter (cfu/ml). We like to see the SPC less than 50,000cfu/ml and coliform counts less than 5,000cfu/ml. For more on coliform count standards go to www.calffacts.com see “Colostrum: Coliform bacteria standards for calf health.”

Or, after 2 days in your refrigerator, check several bottles of colostrum. The presence of off odors signals high bacteria levels. Never feed contaminated colostrum to a newborn calf.

2. Is it fed early enough?

Are 50 percent of your newborns fed colostrum within 1 hour after birth? And, 80 percent within 2 hours after birth?

Every half-hour delay in colostrum feeding may cut a calf's chances of being healthy by 5 percent!

3. Is it rich in antibodies?

Not all colostrum is full of life-sustaining antibodies. One way to check antibody concentration is a Colostrometer® [click [HERE](#) for use guidelines] or a Brix refractometer [click [HERE](#) for a brief review of interpreting the Brix value] 22 is the threshold value to use.

Colostrum from 1 out of 3 cows is likely to have an inadequate antibody concentration. Unless heifers have an aggressive vaccination program, 2 out of 3 heifers is likely give colostrum with an inadequate antibody concentration.

4. Is enough colostrum being fed?

If clean, antibody-rich colostrum is being fed, are you getting 4 quarts fed within the first 6 hours? A good strategy is to feed 2 quarts immediately and 2 more quarts at 4 to 6 hours later.

If clean colostrum of unknown antibody content is being fed, are you getting 4 quarts fed immediately? If the quality is unknown, one way to cover the risk of poor quality is to feed more sooner.

If the colostrum is contaminated with bacteria throw it away. Clean second or third milking from a fresh cow is better than colostrum that has turned into bacteria soup! Or, a colostrum replacer may be fed.

RATE YOURSELF

| | YES | NO |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Checked colostrum bacteria count in this year. | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Four out of 5 calves get first feeding of colostrum within 2 hours after birth. | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Colostrum is sorted by antibody concentration with the best fed to heifer calves. | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Four out of 5 calves are fed 4 qts. of colostrum within 6 hours after birth. | ___ | ___ |

Sam Leadley, Calf & Heifer Management Specialist

sleadley@yahoo.com www.atticacows.com

For Calves with Sam blog go to dairycalfcare.blogspot.com

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