

NEWBORN CALF CARE CHECKLIST

1. PREFRESH COW CARE

Observe:

- **Pack housing – at least 9 to 9.5 square metres per cow**
- **Stall housing – not exceed 100 percent stocking, 80 percent rate preferred.**
- **Feed bunk in group housing – between .75 and .9 metres per cow, prefer more liberal amount of space last week before calving.**
- **Ration is sufficiently energy dense to accommodate decrease in dry matter intake the last 7 to 10 days before calving.**

Action if standards are not met:

- **Provide more space on pack, at the feed bunk**
- **Keep fewer cows in prefresh housing**
- **Rebalance the ration**

2. CALVING MANAGEMENT

Observe:

- **Dead on arrival rate – is it recorded, how close to 5 percent for cows, 8 percent for heifers?**

- **Dystocia management – how often are closeup cows monitored? Is monitoring recorded? How long are cows allowed to show signs of delivery before assistance is given – one hour for cows, two hours for heifers given normal presentation?**
- **Pathogen management – how wet and/or soiled is the bedding in the calving area? How likely is a calf to get adult cow manure in its mouth before being removed from the calving area?**

Action if standards are not met:

- **More frequent monitoring of closeup cows.**
- **Add record keeping of monitoring – improves communication, spot weak links in program.**
- **Add a training session for all employees that possibly assist in delivering calves emphasizing timing and prescribed techniques.**
- **Develop an obstetrical protocol that can be posted to encourage use of prescribed steps for abnormal presentations and twins. Train persons how to follow these steps.**
- **Develop a hygiene protocol for reducing newborn exposure to adult cow manure and calving area pathogens.**

3. CARE FOR THE NEWBORN CALF

Observe:

- **Navel dipping – how soon after birth is a newborn’s umbilical cord and navel opening dipped? Is the dip a 7% tincture of iodine or equivalent solution?**
- **Calf moved to clean area soon after birth to reduce exposure to adult cow manure?**
- **How soon is assistance given a newborn to get her up on her feet?**
- **Especially in freezing weather, how soon is a newborn calf’s coat dry enough to fluff out? Is a warm place available to speed up drying of her coat?**
- **Are records kept of newborn care? Who did what and when?**
- **How soon after birth is colostrum fed a newborn heifer?**
- **What quantity of colostrum is fed a newborn heifer?**
- **Is colostrum quality (antibody concentration) evaluated, and what quality colostrum is fed a newborn heifer?**
- **Is colostrum quality (bacterial concentration) evaluated routinely?**
- **Is effectiveness of passive transfer of antibodies checked routinely (blood serum total protein)?**

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Action if standards are not met:

- **Develop and use a newborn navel dipping protocol using a 7 percent tincture of iodine dip.**
- **Establish a protocol for moving calves from the calving area to a clean environment.**
- **Add record keeping of newborn care – when calf was moved from calving area, navel dipped, fed colostrum, who provided care.**
- **Set up a protocol to get calves dried off and warm during freezing weather – maybe look into supply of towels, a warming area.**
- **Using a Colostrometer® or Brix refractometer check the antibody concentration of colostrum currently on hand. Train an employee to use a Colostrometer or Brix refractometer.**
- **Submit a colostrum sample to a lab to check for species and concentration of bacteria.**
- **Establish a protocol for feeding colostrum that feeds enough clean, good quality colostrum early enough to get 90% of the calves testing 5.2 or higher for blood serum total protein.**

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Dr. Jim Quigley's web site:

www.calfnotes.com At the left, click on “Archives” and then click on “Colostrum Management” for a series of interesting notes.

Dr. Sam Leadley's web site:

www.atticacows.com type colostrum in the search box for colostrum related resources.