

STOP! Don't Cut That Nipple!

Be an Expert; Match Nipple to Drinking Speed!

Is the hole in your calf bottle nipple too large? The opening should be large enough that the calf does not have to struggle to get milk. But, the opening should not so large that when the bottle is tipped upside down the milk pours out of the bottle.

If the nipple opening is too large, milk enters the calf's mouth faster than the calf can swallow. This increases the chances for milk to go into the lungs. This can cause pneumonia. Calves sick with pneumonia require extra work for treatment and result in increased costs for medicines. Equally bad is the potential for permanent lung damage and eventual culling.

An important item to check if the flow of milk seems too slow is the vent hole. The vent hole is needed to allow air into the bottle while milk is being sucked out. This releases the vacuum that is formed. However, the nipple molding process may leave a membrane over the vent. This seals the vent keeping air from getting into the bottle as milk is sucked out. If you see the sides of the bottle collapsing as the calf drinks, then the vent hole is not opened enough.

Opening the vent will keep the bottle from collapsing and allow more even and rapid milk flow. This is a better solution than cutting the nipple opening to enlarge the hole.

Expect huge differences among calves in nursing speeds. Some calves are able to swallow large volumes of milk rapidly. Others seem to choke on even small amounts. The expert skillful calf care person knows how to recognize these differences. He/she can adapt his/her feeding style to match the calf's ability to safely drink from a bottle. Matching the nipple opening to the calf drinking ability is an essential skill for preventing illness caused by milk in the lungs.

For Spanish language, open www.calffacts.com, scroll to “¡Espera! ¡No se corta esa chupon!

Sam Leadley, Calf & Heifer Management Specialist

smleadley@yahoo.com www.atticacows.com

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

© Attica Vet. Assoc. 2019 All Rights Reserved.