FEEDING PREWEANED CALVES: Milk Replacer

How do your procedures measure up? Do they provide the opportunity for your calves to grow into their genetic potential?

Let's consider procedures for feeding milk replacer. Compare your routines 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. All feeding equipment that comes in contact with milk/milk replacer is scrubbed after every use.

_____ 2. Equipment sanitation procedures meet these standards:

- prewash rinse between 105-110°F;
- chlorinated, soapy hot water wash consistently over 120°F and includes manual brushing;
- acid rinse between 50-100°F
- equipment dries between uses.
- Click HERE for a wash protocol (click HERE for the same protocol in Spanish. Click HERE for an equipment washing checklist (click HERE for the same checklist in Spanish).

_____ 3. Milk replacer is stored so that it remains both clean and dry to promote good mixing and reduce scours.

_____ 4. Milk replacer is mixed at the temperature recommended by the manufacturer to promote even distribution of fat and good protein digestibility.

_____ 5. Milk replacer powder is added to the water in the same amount every time to provide consistent dry matter content. [Prefer powder be weighed rather than measured by volume.] Click HERE for mixing tips for milk replacer.

_____ 6. Milk/milk replacer is 100-105°F when drunk by the calves. This improves intake and promotes favorable feed conversion.

_____ 7. Milk/milk replacer is fed regularly at the same time daily according to the same routine preferably by the same caretakers. This promotes good eating habits, effective esophageal groove closure and favorable feed conversion. Click HERE for a resource on calf care consistency.

_____ 8. When periodically cultured for bacteria, the milk replacer mix as fed to calves is not contaminated by environmental bacteria. This reduces scours.

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_____ 9. For farms feeding waste milk, when periodically cultured for bacteria the waste milk as fed to calves is not contaminated by environmental bacteria. This reduces scours and improves feed conversion rates. [Prefer that waste milk be pasteurized!] Click HERE for a sample collection protocol.

When collecting samples for waste milk pasteurizing and feeding the recommend sample collection protocol is:

1. One sample of raw milk going into the pasteurizer.
2. One sample of pasteurized milk coming directly from the pasteurizer.
3. One sample of milk fed to the first calf – estimates initial post-pasteurization contamination.
4. One sample of milk fed to the last calf fed – estimates total post-pasteurization contamination

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