

Calving Practices

Calf and Cow immunity at Calving

Cows have lower immunity around calving making them more vulnerable to infection. Therefore, a clean calving environment is essential to prevent infections and later fertility issues.

Calves are born with a naïve immune system. Therefore, good colostrum management and a clean environment are essential to keep them healthy.





Calving

Calving pens should not be used for sick animals, as a quarantine for sick animals, TB reactor or TB inconclusive animals because this combines the highest-risk animals with those that are most vulnerable during calving.

Calving pens should be cleaned and disinfected after each cow that uses them. Clean udders and clipping tails aids cleanliness during calving and milking, helping to prevent infections.

Calf Management

Dip the calf's navel at birth as this is a route that bacteria can gain entry and cause infection.

Ensure the calf housing has good ventilation.

Avoid draughts in the calf housing because the lower critical temperature for calves is 15°C. Below this, calves use energy to keep warm which suppresses their immune system.

Clean and disinfect pens and equipment between calves. Ideally, the farm routine should be from young to old, starting with the calves as these are the most vulnerable animals in the herd.



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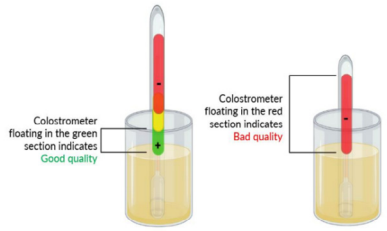
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Colostrum Management: The key to success



Picture A

Colostrum Quantity

Ensure calves receive 3L colostrum in the first 2 hours of life and 6L in the first 24 hours.

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Picture B

Colostrum Quality

Check colostrum quality using a colostrometer or refractometer (Picture A).

Avoid pooling colostrum or milk because the bacteria that causes TB and Johnes disease can be shed in the milk.
Do not use colostrum or milk from other farms as this increases the risk of an incursion of TB, Johnes and other diseases spread in milk, to your farm.

Ideally, pasteurise colostrum and milk to reduce the risk of contamination by bacteria and viruses.
Pasteurisation typically requires either 63°C for 30 minutes or 72°C for 15 seconds (Picture B).



Picture C

Colostrum Shortages

If there is a shortage of colostrum, either use artificial colostrum or, in preparation, freeze colostrum from individual cows on your farm.

Labeled frozen colostrum with the date and cow's ID.
Frozen colostrum can be stored for 6 months (Picture C).

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