

NEWBORN HEALTH STARTS AT CALVING

Preventing infection costs much less than treating disease. We all know this. But it's hard to put into practice. What can we do to prevent calfhood infections?

Well bedded dry cow facilities are profitable.

Close up cows are cleaner when we move them to pre-fresh or calving housing. Their coats are less matted and udders are cleaner. If a birth is unattended calves are much less likely to get a mouth full of manure before their first swallow of colostrum.

Well bedded calving facilities are profitable.

The cows are cleaner at calving. Especially important, calves rest on clean, dry bedding as they are born. Severe pathogen exposure at birth often is an impossible challenge to overcome even with superior colostrum feeding practices.

Prompt milking of fresh dams is profitable.

The amount of antibodies to be harvested in the colostrum is fixed at calving. The sooner the cow is milked after calving the less milk she has produced to dilute these antibodies. Low antibody concentrations in colostrum are not only due to leaking after calving but also to dilution by milk produced between calving and the first milking.

Prompt colostrum feeding is profitable.

In the first four hours after birth, a calf's ability to absorb antibodies from her first colostrum feeding drops about fifty percent. At eight hours post calving the antibody absorption rate is down to only one-quarter of what it was when the calf was born. Early colostrum feeding gets a larger number of antibodies into a calf's bloodstream than delayed feeding. Antibodies equal immunity. Calves with greater immunity are healthier overall. They have fewer infectious diseases.