

Winter Calf Care

The polar vortex temperatures like those we saw in January can be very hard on young calves. These are some tips to help prevent cold stress in baby calves.

- **Nutrition**

- Cold temperatures drastically increase a calf's energy needs. When temperatures drop from 70°F to 10°F, calf's energy needs increase by 85%! To meet those needs, calves need more milk at each feeding, and even an extra feeding on days when temperatures stay below zero. If feeding milk replacer, it should have a minimum fat to protein ratio of 20:24.

- **Water**

- Water is an essential nutrient that is not available for many calves in the winter due the limitations caused by freezing temperatures. Providing water is even more important in cold stressed calves. Offer calves a small amount of warm water in pails or bottles 1-2 times a day in cold weather. If they are going to drink, the water will usually be gone within minutes before it has a chance to freeze. The more fluid a calf takes in, the more grain it will eat to help meet those cold weather energy needs.

- **Bedding**

- Lots of dry, deeply bedded straw is ideal for calves in the winter. Calves need to be able to "nest" down in the straw. When bedded properly, you should not see the calf's legs when it lays down in the straw.

- **Jackets**

- Calf jackets are an economical way to help calves stay warm and conserve much needed energy. Nearly every dairy farm using calf jackets will see higher average daily gains in their calves during the winter month.

- **Newborns**

- The first couple hours of a life for a calf are critically important in the cold winter months. Maternity pens must be frequently monitored so newborn calves can be moved to a warm environment ASAP. Have towels available in the maternity areas to dry off calves. A calf with a cold wet coat uses huge amounts of energy to stay warm. Feed a gallon of clean, high quality colostrum ASAP after birth to develop a good immune system.



Milk Sampling Tips

A dirty milk sample collected for culture is useless and is a waste of your time and money. Clean milk samples should be carefully collected using these steps:

- 1 - Prep the udder as you normally would for milking, paying close attention to clean teat ends
- 2 - Wipe each teat end with an alcohol wipe*
- 3 - Open the sterile sample container and, without touching the inside of the lid, tilt the opening towards the teat end; Do not allow any dirt, manure, etc. to fall into the container and contaminate it
- 4 - Strip milk into the container from the quarter(s) to be sampled**
- 5 - Close container and use a permanent marker to label with cow number, quarter, & date
- 6 - Immediately refrigerate the sample if bringing in the same day, or freeze to bring in later

NOTE: To collect all four quarters into one single sample -

* Begin disinfecting the teats farthest from you, then teats closest to you

** Collect quarter samples in the reverse order, starting with teats closest to you

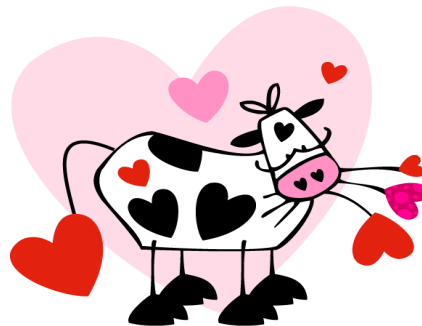
Culturing cows with clinical mastitis and making treatment decisions based on those results has many benefits, including increased cure rates, less antibiotic usage, and savings in drug costs and lost milk. We have a very experienced in-house lab that cultures many milk samples every day. Please contact our office or ask one of our veterinarians if you have questions about milk culturing.

Good Luck Dr.Gardner!

Dr. Joanna Gardner's last day at Northern Valley will be February 19th. We want to wish her well on her move to New York City!

Welcome Dr. Megan Thompson

Dr. Megan Thompson will be joining our practice on March 1st 2016. Dr. Thompson is a 2015 graduate at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Minnesota and is currently in practice in Harmony Minnesota. Her primary interest is dairy production medicine. We are excited to have Dr. Thompson join our team.



Happy Valentine's Day!

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