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We will provide industry-leading, reliable, knowledgeable service, in a friendly, courteous and timely manner, to benefit our clients and the communities we serve.

St Clements Clinic Hours: Mon-Fri 7am to 5pm Open Saturday 7am-12pm Closed Sunday

Hwy 89 Clinic Hours: Mon-Sat 7am to 1 pm Closed Sunday

CLINICS ARE CLOSED SUNDAY and NO DELIVERY SERVICE SATURDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Orders for Delivery: Please, call BEFORE 9:30 am, for same day local delivery Monday to Friday

24 Hour Emergency Vet Service - call 519-698-2610 519-323-9002 519-699-0404 1-800-663-2941

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Announcements & Upcoming Dates

Family Day: February 17th, 2025: There will be no delivery service on Family Day. Both the St. Clements and Hwy 89 clinics will be open only in the morning. The on-call vet will be available for emergencies.

Samples

Please label your blood/fecal/milk or other samples with your farm name, animal ID, and date. This helps to avoid confusion when multiple blank samples are sent in.

Happy New Year!

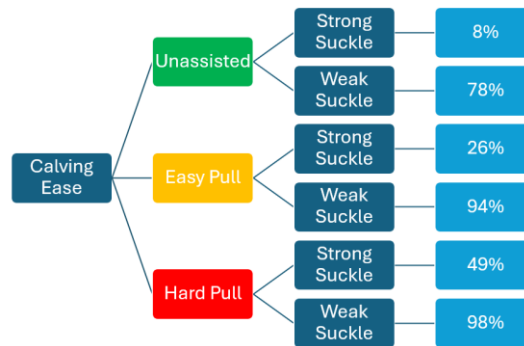
Colostrum Management of Beef Calves

With calving season starting up for many of our beef producers, this month's newsletter will discuss how to identify and manage those calves that may need a little extra care and attention at birth.

As you probably know, calves rely on maternal antibodies found in colostrum to fight off disease while their own immune system develops. If calves do not consume enough colostrum shortly after birth, failure of transfer of passive immunity (FTPI) can occur, meaning the calf does not have enough maternal antibodies to be able to thrive. The average cost of FTPI per beef calf (from lost revenue due to decreased growth and increased mortality, as well as treatment costs of disease) is about \$110, according to one study. This number alone justifies the cost of colostrum replacer for these calves!

The main predictors of whether a calf will consume enough colostrum within 4 hours of birth (putting them at a greatly increased risk for FTPI) are **calving difficulty** and **suckle reflex**. This chart illustrates how these two factors interact:

% of calves failing to consume colostrum <4h after birth



Other risk factors for not getting enough colostrum include twin births and heifer dams.

Practical Application:

1. When do I give colostrum?

- When considering whether to give colostrum, you must balance the need to get enough maternal antibodies into the calf with not overly interfering with nursing and maternal bonding.
 - If you had to pull a calf, assess its suckle reflex within 10 minutes of birth. If it was a hard pull, the suckle reflex is weak, or there are other risk factors such as twins, strongly consider giving colostrum.
 - Watch unassisted calves as well to make sure they are nursing.
- **TIMING** is the most important factor for successful transfer of passive immunity – colostrum should be fed within 4 hours of birth, the earlier the better.

2. What colostrum do I feed?

- **Colostrum from the dam** is always the best source for the calf. If you have adequate handling facilities and a relatively calm dam, milking her and feeding her colostrum to the calf is the most ideal (make sure any pails and bottles you are using are CLEAN (not just rinsed off!) to minimize risk of disease to the calf!).
- If milking the dam is not an option, **colostrum replacer** is the next best option. When selecting a product, look for colostrum replacers rather than colostrum supplements, and look for products derived from bovine colostrum rather than serum-derived products. At our clinic we stock Calf's Choice Total, which is a bovine colostrum-derived replacer.
- It can be tempting to go to the dairy farm next door and borrow some of their frozen colostrum. In a pinch, this may be the only option you have, and any colostrum is better than no colostrum. However, avoid making this your go-to option. Some things to consider are that since dairy cows produce so much more milk than beef cows, the concentration of antibodies in their colostrum is lower, and calves must drink more to get the same benefit. Another important consideration is biosecurity. Some diseases can be transmitted from dam to calf through the colostrum, and your neighbour might have diseases on their farm that you don't have on yours.
 - If you are using frozen colostrum, warm it up gradually in warm water before feeding. Do not put it into hot water, as this will deactivate the antibodies in the colostrum.

3. How much do I feed?

- If feeding within 30 minutes of birth, give 1.5L of beef colostrum or colostrum replacer.
- If feeding later than that (but still within 4-6 hours), give 2L.
- If feeding dairy colostrum, more might be needed. Dairy calves receive at least 4L within the first 12 hours of life, spread across multiple feedings.

4. How do I feed?

- **Bottle feeding** is ideal, but if the calf won't take a bottle, tube feeding is better than waiting.
- If you feed some by bottle and have to finish by tube, watch to make sure the calf nurses within 8-12 hours. If they don't, feed them again.

If you have any questions about assessing your calves, using equipment such as tube feeders, or anything else you need help with, our team of veterinarians and support staff would be happy to assist you!

Source: Dr. Claire Windeyer, University of Calgary