



Newborn Calf Management Tips

Cows about to calf should be monitored every two hours and delivery assisted as needed. Cows should deliver 30 minutes to 1 hour after the fetus appears in the pelvic area (heifers about 2 hours). Don't be in a hurry, and use good judgment.

TABLE 1. Calf Mortality By Difficulty Of Birth Category

Category	Calving %		Calf Mortality % in 48 Hours	
	Heifers	Cows	Heifers	Cows
Unassisted	45	79	8	6
Easy Pull	30	15	10	8
Hard Pull	14	3	35	24
Jack Needed	7	1	55	66
Veterinarian	4	1	48	65

Source: North Carolina State University

Feed high quality colostrum as soon as possible, preferably 3-4 quarts (Jerseys @ 2-3 quarts), and again 6-8 hours later. Emergency supplies can be frozen, but thaw gently. Place 3 quarts in a gallon bag, then double bag it and freeze in a flat position. Label each bag with the cow's identification, date, and Ig level. Thawing should occur in warm water (90-125 degrees) and should take 15-20 minutes. A colostrum replacement like **Rite Start Complete** can be purchased and used for the first feeding. Cows accumulate immunoglobulins over several days ahead of calving. Leaking milk or first milking over 18 lbs dilutes these antibodies.

* Obtained from www.calfnotes.com

If the calf will not suckle, an esophageal feeder can be used. The bulb at the end of the tube prevents the tube from going into the lungs. Gently push the tube down and also withdraw it gently to prevent inflammation of the throat or esophagus.

Dip the calf's naval in a 7% iodine solution. A spray often does not completely cover the naval.

Newborn Constipation*

The fetus accumulates waste products while in the dam. Some amount of waste does collect in the calf's intestines before birth. When colostrum is fed and the calf has difficulty defecating, discomfort can ensue, resulting in the calf having no desire to eat. Usually the calf will eventually pass a rather large volume of feces often characterized by unusual colors such as black/green rather than the "normal" yellow/orange.

Care At Birth Essential For Later Growth*

Get her up, get her dry, and get her fed. Getting the calf into a standing position apparently triggers the release of hormones that jump-starts the calf's metabolic rate. Drying the calf conserves her energy to use for growth rather than maintaining body temperature. Finally, colostrum provides a rich nutrient source and helps ward off pathogens.