



DAIRYINFO

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Taking service to another level!

Dehydration in Dairy Calves

Evaluating and monitoring dehydration in dairy calves is an important task for every calf caretaker. It requires careful observation, attention to individual calves, and the ability to accurately evaluate hydration status. Sick calves may lose up to



10% of their body weight in a single day when they are scouring - and dehydration, not microorganisms, typically kills those scouring calves. Therefore, early identification and treatment of dehydrated calves will help increase calf survival rates.

To evaluate hydration status, first you need to determine the fecal score of your calves. Those with very loose or runny feces are at serious risk of becoming dehydrated. Carefully inspect these calves for classic signs of dehydration: sunken eyes, dry mouth and nose, weight loss, fast or slow pulse, cold ears, and/or cold legs.

One way to measure dehydration is the skin tenting check. To tent the skin, firmly pinch the loose folds of skin on the neck of the calf and check to see how long the skin remains tented. If it remains tented for 2 to 6 seconds, the calf is moderately dehydrated. If the tenting remains for longer than 6 seconds the calf is severely dehydrated.

An easy way to treat dehydration is by feeding calves an electrolyte solution.* Feed moderately dehydrated calves 1-2 liters of electrolyte solution twice daily, according to recommendations on the label. You may also want to consider an additional feeding at midday. Continue to feed dehydrated calves milk replacer but do not mix electrolytes with the milk replacer feeding in order to provide them with the extra fluids and energy that they need. Electrolytes should be fed before or after milk replacer (with at least one hour between feedings) for a period of 2 to 4 days or until the calf is no longer scouring and does not appear to be dehydrated based on skin tenting and observation. Calves need a great deal of fluid to make up for what is lost during scouring, and careful observation and treatment can prevent a high mortality rate due to dehydration from scouring.

(Edited from an article by Heinrichs & Kehoe, PSU)

*Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call us!
Our goal is to help you. That's our W-S Feed commitment!*

Best Management Practices...

It's time to prepare for the forage season and to review management factors that can make a difference when producing quality forages. Here are some practical suggestions, as we go into this season of preparation, planting, harvesting and preserving:

1. Prepare fields: remove large stones, get the surface as flat as possible.
2. Make sure equipment, silo(s) or bunker(s) are in good repair; purchase supplies such as silo bags, and inoculant/preservatives before hand – downtime and delays impact the quality of forage.
3. Avoid overusing fertilizers. Time applications correctly. It is a good idea to have your soil tested.
4. Harvest at optimum growth stage for maximum results and optimum nutritional value.
5. Use only a research-tested, proven inoculant or preservative. Make sure it is packaged, handled and applied correctly. Be sure to read the label.
6. Optimize the chop length setting and use sharp blades when harvesting.
7. Fill silo, bunk or bag quickly. Consolidate thoroughly and pack every load properly (achieve minimum packing density of 6.4 kg dry matter/cubic foot).
8. Cover and seal silage quickly and properly.
9. Maintain a proper feedout rate and keep the bunker or bag face smooth and tidy.
10. Work with your Renaissance nutritionist to ensure a well-balanced ration is fed. Once harvested and ensiled, the quality of the silage is essentially fixed. The remainder of the ration needs to be adjusted accordingly to help ensure better results.

PLAN AHEAD FOR HEAT STRESS BEFORE IT HAPPENS!

Consider these tips:

- ◆ Adequate energy and a "rumen friendly" ration
- ◆ Airflow and/or sprinklers for better cow cooling
- ◆ Continually available fresh, clean water
- ◆ Protection from direct exposure to the sun

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SPRING!

In order to maximize yield, it is important that corn is planted *prior to the end* of the optimum planting time for each climatic zone. The optimum planting period for any area is the range of dates that provides the best combination of moisture, soil and air temperature, along with the quality of seed to be planted and its average days to maturity (RM). The optimum planting range for corn is approximately 2-3 weeks. Planting after this optimum time will usually result in lower yields, with many studies showing a rate of approximately ½% loss in yield potential/day following a delay in planting. The longer you delay planting, the greater the decline in potential yield rates and in the speed of the rate of decline. I will be happy to work with you to determine the optimum planting time(s) for our area – and to help you make the most of this year's crops! Make the most of your planting... for results.

Quality Inputs?

The digestive system of a cow is a remarkable thing. Cows consume forages and feeds that help maintain a population of rumen 'bugs'. In turn, these 'bugs' aid in the breakdown and utilization of ingredients, and also contribute to the nutrient value of the ration when they die and are digested by the cow. This entire process (rumination) serves to maintain the rumen's microbial population, along with milk production and body condition!

But can a cow function just as well on poor, low-quality inputs? Can she produce milk up to her genetic potential on 'whatever we feed her'? Can she maintain optimal reproductive function? Simply stated... no! While the cow will make the best use of whatever feeds and forages she is given, there is a point at which her unique system will start to decline, impacting her body condition, health, reproduction and production. Quality forages, feeds and nutrient supplements will help her maintain necessary body and production demands. This is critical to her functionality.



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BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES...**

QUALITY INPUTS?

CHECK IT OUT!