



# DAIRYINFO

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*Taking service to another level!*

## **Raising Healthy Heifers...**

A strong foundation is necessary to build a profitable operation and heifers are the foundation of any dairy. Heifer development may represent an area of potentially hidden losses or valuable gains. Calves and heifers are vitally important to the future of your entire herd. Careful attention must be paid to these two groups, even though they are young and not yet productive. Future economic benefits are huge and advantages of a more profitable heifer program can be easily calculated. In order to maximize heifer development, with the goal of calving at 24 months, there are several critical things to consider. Attention to these issues can make a productive difference in your calf and heifer program. Consider these items as you review and evaluate your program:

- ◆ Starting right is essential to ensuring quality results! This includes feeding quality colostrum [from the dam] immediately after birth, followed by use of a properly formulated milk replacer until weaning.
- ◆ Feed a quality calf starter beginning within the first few days and maintain intakes until weaning. W-S FEED products have been carefully balanced to ensure calves get what they need... when they need it.
- ◆ Ensure adequate nutrition – energy, protein and other necessary nutrients - as the calf/heifer develops. Studies show that heifers lacking nutrition grow more slowly and often have a lower breeding efficiency than properly fed heifers. Deficiencies of energy, protein, phosphorus, iodine, manganese, zinc, vitamin A, cobalt, salt, and/or water are probably the most common ones in growing heifers.
- ◆ Group heifers with similar weights, which will enable rations to be targeted to that specific level of development. This will also help to limit competition among heifers. Additionally, by grouping heifers you can more easily locate those that are the correct breeding age and size.
- ◆ In order to help maximize growth, replacement heifers must have dry, comfortable bedding and proper ventilation at all times. Hygiene is critically important. Open housing is excellent as long as shade and wind blocks are provided. The positive impact of ensuring good housing and comfort for calves and heifers is well documented.
- ◆ Provide fresh, clean water at all times!
- ◆ Parasites and disease can substantially reduce heifer weight gain. A routine deworming and vaccination program is essential to an effective heifer program. Heifers should be appropriately dewormed prior to freshening. This will ensure maximum performance early in lactation.

Make the most of your future herd with a well-managed calf and heifer program... and watch your future grow.

## **Heifers and Mastitis...**

Dairy producers might think that their heifers freshen free of udder infections. However, this is not always the case. Mastitis was a poorly recognized problem in heifers before a study in 1983 (*Oliver & Mitchell et al*), in which they reported a high proportion of infected quarters in heifers during the pre-calving period, as well as at the onset of lactation. Since this initial study, several others have reported similar findings of intramammary infection (IMI) in heifers, reaching up to 97% heifers infected at calving (*Pankey et al., 1991; Fox et al., 1995; Owens et al., 2001*). Averages of IMI in un-bred or pregnant heifers can be as high as those recorded at calving, indicating that infection often occurs several weeks or months prior to calving (*Trinidad et al., 1990; Oliver et al., 2001; etc.*). All of these studies indicate that IMI in heifers is frequent. The incidence of IMI sometimes occurs at a critical time in mammary gland development and may decrease glandular tissue, thus reducing milk production in subsequent lactations. Infected heifers produce less milk during their first lactation, while their SSC is also increased and may persist for an extended period of time.

*(edited from an article by Emile Bouchard, University of Montreal, Canada; 2005)*

## **FORAGE TESTS!**

What kind of digestibility or energy values can we expect with corn silage this year? Lab analyses help us evaluate silage, while also guiding ration formulation – how can this year's silage be best supplemented to enhance productivity, health, and profitability? Forage testing is critical to good nutrition. When the nutrient content and digestibility of silage are known it is easier to formulate a ration that can facilitate increased milk and milk components, along with improved cow health. Renaissance understands the need for qualitative analysis of forages. Once the digestibility of fiber, protein and starch are known I can work with you to help reduce off-farm feeding costs ~ picking and choosing from available feedstuffs in order to maximize digestible feeds and necessary nutrients. Then you'll be giving your cows what they need... when they need it! Here's to a great harvest and good seasons ahead!



*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 the W-S Feed commitment!*

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**W-S FEED... THE TEAM FOR SUCCESS!**

## **PLANNING FOR WINTER!**

As temperatures gradually drop, it is important to ensure your calves are getting the energy and nutrition needed to maintain body temperature and growth. One way to help ensure demands are met is to increase the amount of **MILK REPLACER** they receive each day, along with provision of a quality calf starter. Our calf products are an excellent choice, as are our research-tested milk replacers. Ask me about a useful chart that can help to calculate the needs of your calves as temperatures decline this fall and winter. Impact your calves now... and in the future. Call me today for details!

**START 'EM RIGHT &  
START 'EM FOR RESULTS!**

## **Double crop with legumes**

Winter triticale can reduce the spring work load. By planting it early enough in the fall, you might also consider seeding red clover with it. Producers have found that harvesting the triticale at flag leaf stage allows the clover to put on tremendous growth (assuming normal moisture) to give you two more cuttings. Research using red clover versus alfalfa in comparing drying rates found they dry initially at the same rate to 75% moisture. After that the alfalfa continues to dry as the leaves curl and expose lower layers. Clover does not. Tedding the clover dramatically dropped the moisture level to below optimum for silage in 4½ hours after mowing. This was wide swath-cut with no conditioning. The bottom line: as with any crop, there is a learning curve. Check out information on how to best grow this crop, both triticale and red clover! Information is available at <http://www.advancedagsys.com>. We make the mistakes so you don't have to. There is more to be learned about winter triticale, as we push yields to the 4–5 tons of dry matter/acre often noted in harvests in parts of the northeast and Midwest. Research continues with other combinations in order to continually push forage quality and yield at economical cost for high forage diets. Get the facts today and plan ahead for all your forage needs!

*(Edited from an article by Tom Kilcer, Advanced Ag Systems, Kinderhook, New York)*



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***OCTOBER 2016  
CHECK IT OUT!***