



# DAIRYINFO

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*Taking service to another level!*

## **A Successful Calf & Heifer Program**

Your future herd begins with a successful pre-partum cow program, along with carefully planned and managed calf and heifer programs. A calf, at birth, represents a future with potential. The magnitude of this potential relies, in part, on her genetics.

However, good nutrition and management will also substantially impact her future productivity and profitability. Getting her off to a good start is vitally important. Here are a few tips on helping your heifer calves grow and mature into productive members of the lactating herd. You might consider integrating them into your current program, or ask me about these and many other possibilities that can help you move your operation forward.

- Develop a vaccination program for the entire herd, which will help with the production of quality colostrum. Check with your herd veterinarian for recommendations.
- Make sure the cow will calve in a clean, dry and well-bedded pen. This area should allow for easy observation, but be free of excessive noise and interruption. Sanitation is critical at all times, including a handler's hands and arms. Use of disposable plastic sleeves is recommended if the cow requires assistance during calving.
- After birth, dip and soak the umbilical cord in a 7% tincture of iodine solution. It is also important that the calf is properly dried. This is critical especially in colder weather.
- Feed the calf colostrum from its dam. This is preferably given from a bottle, rather than directly from the cow. This will help reduce the incidence of disease and allow you to control the volume of colostrum fed.
- Ensure the calf receives sufficient colostrum during the first several feedings (3.8 liters by 12 hours of age). Colostrum provides valuable antibodies needed by calves in the early weeks of life.
- For calves older than 24 hours the value of feeding colostrum is greatly reduced. At this point calves should be placed on a quality milk replacer. I can recommend a milk replacer that best fits your operation!

- Observe calves closely for the first 3-5 days, watching for signs of scouring or other symptoms of disease. Any health problems that are observed should be immediately addressed. A few hours in delay can mean loss of the calf. She should also have a high caliber calf starter.
- The introduction of starter feed within one week of the calf's birth is important.
- Calf housing areas should be kept clean and dry at all times and out of drafts, wind and inclement weather conditions.
- Ensure good sanitation at all times, including pens, hutches, bottles, buckets, etc. This is important in helping to reduce the possibility of infection and spread of disease.

The goal of a quality calf/heifer program is to have them calve in 22-24 months and join the lactating herd as productive and profitable cows. More management tips will be presented in the April issue – looking at the weaned calf and beyond. I will be happy to work with you in reviewing your entire calf and heifer program, as well as what you have in place for dry cows and the lactating herd. Contact me today and let's work as a team to **GET MILK!** After all, it all begins... at calving!

## **LOOKING AHEAD... SPRINGTIME!**

Winter holds on tightly, with cold and wet weather continuing to plague many parts of the country. But, we know that spring is coming and with it the tasks of soil preparation and then planting. Even though the temperatures remain cool (or cold), it isn't too early to start planning ahead for coming days of heat and humidity. The impact of heat stress can be substantial on any cow. This also impacts your calves, heifers and dry cows! Take time to review your management strategies for dealing with heat this spring and summer. This also includes your ration program! Call today and let's take time to plan ahead *before* the thermometer rises. It can make a real difference!

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*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!*

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**We're On Your Team!**

**SOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

## *Spring is coming!*

It's time to 'dust off' all the planting-related equipment, after a winter of sitting outside or in a shed. Soon you'll be in the fields preparing and planting, as we gradually move into the growing season... and this cycle of renewal begins once again. This is also an excellent time to get your footbath up-and-running again, if it has not been used since cold weather arrived. Healthy feet are critical to a dairy, impacting productivity and profitability.

There are plenty of jobs around a farm in the spring as we take time to give everything a 'spring cleaning' – and then begin preparations for the eventuality of heat stress and humidity.

Give us a call and let us work with you in getting your cows off to a good start this spring and into the coming summer months!

## *Farm safety & spring planting...*

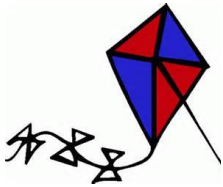
Many areas feature a "Farm Safety Week" early in the month of March ~ an opportunity to focus on the critical need for safety at all levels on and around the farm. Paying attention to details of safety is critical to you and everyone who works on your farm. We often think that our farm is a safe place, an assumption based on the fact that we are conscious of the need for farm safety combined with the possible fact that there has never been an accident or injury. Farm safety is a complex issue on any operation regardless of size! Have you developed a "safety protocol" for your farm? This should include the use and operation of all machinery and equipment, stating concerns and cautions. How about livestock handling procedures; working around chemicals and manure handling systems; feed storage units; electrical systems; accessibility [by children, especially] to all aspects of the farm; and more? While a written, posted policy and procedure statement may not eliminate accidents, it can certainly help in keeping everyone who works and visits your farm more informed about safety expectations. Take a few moments to consider safety on your farm and have a safe, productive spring!



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# **MARCH 2016**

## **A SUCCESSFUL CALF & HEIFER PROGRAM**

## **FARM SAFETY & SPRING PLANTING...**

## **SPRING IS COMING!**

# **CHECK IT OUT!**