



Tips and Tricks for Calving Season

Calving season can be a very exciting but exhausting time for producers. Before you dive into the season, we have created some helpful tips and tricks to help make your calving as stress-free as possible.

Pre-Calving:

- Nutrition while preparing to calve can impact calving as well as the quality and quantity of colostrum and milk for the calf.
- Nutritionally the final six weeks of pregnancy are critical to ensuring the cow is prepared to produce a calf with good vigor along with colostrum for the new-born calf.
- Scours is a major concern at calving. Having a solid mineral program prior to calving will improve calf health, as well shortening the calving interval and improving conceptions rates.
- Working with your Veterinarian to develop a vaccination program along with a Nutritionist to nutritionally prepare cows for calving will optimize calf health.
- Ensure your calving kit is on hand and ready to go, with some items such as: calving aids (e.g. calf puller), iodine solution, gloves, lubricants, disinfectant, dried or frozen colostrum, stomach tube and or bottle.



Calving:

- Clean, dry calving pens are vital to prevent the transfer of pathogens to newborn calves.
- Colostrum is vital!
- Generally, calves should be offered at least 2 litres of colostrum during the first two hours of life.
- If feeding natural colostrum, ensure it is warmed to 38 °C, but NEVER thaw it in the microwave. Heating it in the microwave destroys the antibodies.
- Colostrum also known as the “first milk” and contains:
 - Growth factors and hormones
 - Protective immunoglobulins
 - Nutrients and energy
- Either a natural colostrum provided by the cow, or a dried colostrum product
- Colostrum contains more total solids, higher fat and more protein than regular milk. It also contains higher Vitamin A and E.
- Did you know while a human baby has ~20% body fat at birth, a calf has ~4% body fat at birth, and therefore does not have much time to survive without being fed.
- Calves that fail to achieve adequate passive transfer are 5 times more likely to die.
- Ensure bottles and tube feeders are disinfected after every calf, to help prevent any disease transfer
- Keep records – Records provide you with benchmarks which can measure the performance of your operation.
- Benchmarks also allow you to compare your production against either your operations past production, or fellow cattle producers. This allows you to establish your strengths and weaknesses, and allow you to make management and financial decisions, which in turn will aid in making you more profitable. You can't manage what you don't measure! If you are new to benchmarking, the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC) has some great information on getting started in record keeping and benchmarking.

Ingredient (% content)	Colostrum	Whole Milk
Immunoglobulins	6.00	0.09
Total Solids	23.90	12.90
Total Protein	14.00	3.20
Total Minerals	1.11	0.74
Casein	4.80	2.50
Lactose	2.70	4.90
Fat	6.70	4.00

Source: www.beefresearch.ca/resources/recordkeeping/record-keeping-and-benchmarking-overview.cfm