

Cold Weather Calf Care Checklist

Are you using effective cold weather calf care management procedures? Do they provide the opportunity for your employees to provide quality calf care?

Let's consider your cold weather calf care procedures. Compare your actions with the standards in this checklist. When making this evaluation I like to use these scores:

1=never, 2=seldom, 3=often, 4=usually, and 5=almost always.

- _____ 1. I feed all calves at least 3.5 litres of high quality, clean colostrum no later than 6 hours after birth. (At www.atticacows.com at Irish Calf Facts, see "Colostrum feeding checklist.")

- _____ 2. For calves consuming primarily a liquid ration, I feed enough milk/milk replacer appropriate to the environmental temperature to provide enough energy for both maintenance and at least 0.45kg/day growth. (At www.calfnotes.com, see Jan'01 Calving Ease "Cold Weather and Energy for Calves.")

- _____ 3. For calves on a combination liquid and calf concentrates, I feed ad lib calf concentrates. (At www.atticacows.com, at Irish Calf Facts, see "Concentrate feeding checklist.")

- _____ 4. I provide ad lib water to all calves in both non-freezing and freezing weather. (At www.atticacows.com, at Irish Calf Facts, see "Water feeding checklist.")

- _____ 5. During cold weather, I dry calves enough at birth enough to fluff their coats in order to reduce evaporation heat losses.

- _____ 6. During cold weather in calf housing, I provide adequate air exchange (15 cfm/min/calf) without creating drafts on individual calves. (At www.ansci.cornell.edu/prodairy/ choose in order, "Resources," "Dairy Facilities," "Papers," "Articles," and "Calf & Heifer Facilities" to get to Curt Gooch's paper, "Existing Facilities for Replacement Heifers.")

- _____ 7. In all housing in cold weather, I keep an adequate layer of dry bedding underneath calves to insulate them from a cold base. Much of the insulation value of bedding is lost when it is wet. Wet bedding can have three times the heat loss as dry bedding.

- _____ 8. In all housing in cold weather, I control convection losses either by adequate soft bedding to allow "nesting" or by the use of calf blankets.