



Colostrum management Tips

Munashe Chigerwe
University of California Davis




Objectives of the discussion

- The objective of this discussion is to:
- Explain why feeding colostrum is important to dairy calves.
- Know when to feed colostrum, how much to feed, how to feed, and how to check if we fed enough.
- Discuss if feeding insufficient colostrum is a problem in California.



Why is colostrum important to calves?

- Calves don't get protection while the cow is pregnant.
 - Colostrum is the only way they get immune protection after birth.
 - Insufficient colostrum intake increases sickness and death.
 - Sickness = diarrhea and pneumonia.
 - When they become cows = less milk.
- 

When should we feed colostrum to calves?

- Collect colostrum from cow soon after birth if possible or use frozen colostrum.
- Give colostrum to the calf soon after birth = within 2 hours is the best.



How much colostrum should we feed?

- First feeding: 2 quarts within 2 hours after birth.
- Second feeding: 2 quarts at 12 hours of age.
- Total fed within 24 hours = 4 quarts.



How should we feed colostrum

- By bottle
- By tube



How do we know we fed enough colostrum?

- ▶ Test the blood at 1- 6 days of age: UC Davis can test this for you if you are interested.



How many calves are not fed sufficient colostrum in California?

- ▶ 1 in 5 dairy calves are fed insufficient colostrum.
- ▶ Increases in sickness and death among calves.
- ▶ Money losses through treatments and veterinary bills.



Summary



Calf born

Collect colostrum from cow within 2 hours or use frozen colostrum

Feed 2 quarts within 2 hours after birth

Feed 2 quarts at 12 hours

Check if calves got enough colostrum at 1 – 6 days