



Deckerville Veterinary Clinic, P.C.

www.deckervillevet.com

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From the Dr's desk.....Dr. Chad Vogel

I was recently at the Great Lakes Dairy Calf Symposium. I just wanted to reiterate some of the major points on how we can do a better job raising our calves. When it comes down to it you just can't beat food husbandry and good nutrition not only for performance, but health as well. It has been shown in 8 university trials that calves fed a higher plane of nutrition (aka more milk or milk replacer) produce between 1000 and 3000 lbs more milk during their first lactation. They also tend to enter the milking herd 15 days earlier on average and respond better to disease challenges in the first 8 weeks of life.

Two quarts twice a day of a 20/20 milk replacer has been the main stay for a long time, however calves on average only gain about .4 lbs/day on this lower plane nutrition and that is if everything goes right. Calves fed a high plane of nutrition have on average gain about .8 lbs/day. There are many different tactics you can implement to get a higher plane of nutrition.

- 3X feeding w/o changes ie. 2 quarts of water 10-12 oz of milk replacer.
- 3-4 quarts of water and 1 lb of milk replacer 2x daily
- 28:20 milk replacers
- Computer feeders
- Free choice acidified milk

I have heard a lot of excuses in the past like calves getting loose, cost, and this is how we've always done it. There is a difference between a calf having loose manure and a calf that is scouring. Yes, most likely calves fed more will be looser just due to more consumption. However, you can assess attitude, appetite, and general appearance to monitor for scours. It's not uncommon to still have some scours on the farm; however, calves fed higher planes of nutrition tend to have shorter less severe bouts. I believe this is due to greater energy reserves to fuel the immune system and fighting off diseases. As far as cost is concerned, how about considering cost/lb of gain instead of cost/head/day. See chart below for example. Pay for performance=\$ /lb and/or inches of gain in weight and height respective.

Product	\$ Cost/bag	NRC Projected ADG	\$ Cost/pound gain
28/20 @ 2.5 lbs/day	60	1.97	\$1.52
28/20 @ 1.8 lbs/day	60	1.02	\$2.12
28/20 @ 1.5 lbs/day	53	0.53	\$3.00
20/20 @ 1 lbs/day	45	Weight loss	\$>10.00

Other important considerations to proper feeding in order to optimize health and performance

- Good Sanitation-keep bottles, buckets, and other equipment clean
- Keep calves clean and dry with proper ventilation
- Weigh the powder—there is no standard cup between manufacturers
- Monitor temperature of milk at the last calf fed (should be >95F)
- Read the bag—mixing instructions between different milk replacers can be very different

Remember, these calves are an investment to your Dairy herd's future. You never get a second chance to get them off to a good start.