



CLUTHA  
VETS

# Calf-Link

Clutha Vets Newsletter for Calf Rearers



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## Colostrum

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Colostrum is the first milk produced by the cow around the time of calving. It is different from normal milk in that it contains immunoglobulins (antibodies), more protein and fat and has higher concentration of vitamins and minerals. Nature has designed it as the perfect food for young calves.

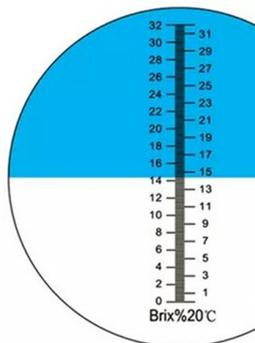


Antibodies are **VERY** important as they are required to fight off infections. A calf is born without antibodies as the cow cannot pass her antibodies across the placenta during pregnancy. The only way a young calf can get them from its mum, is through the colostrum she produces. During the first **6 HOURS** after birth, the calf's intestine readily absorbs antibodies from the colostrum. This ability rapidly decreases from 6 hours to 24 hours. After 24 hours, no further antibodies will be absorbed. Therefore it is essential that calves receive adequate amounts of colostrum within the first few hours of life, to protect them from a wide range of infections.

All calves should receive **at least** 10% of their body weight of colostrum, within 6 hours of birth. To ensure this, they should all be stomach tubed at the earliest possible opportunity.

### Colostrum Quality

- Antibody levels can be measured using a Brix refractometer.
- Levels above 22 indicate excellent colostrum.
- Brix refractometers can be purchased from Clutha Vets.



You will see blue above and white below.  
The blue-white line corresponds to the brix reading.  
Over 22% = good quality.  
The example here would indicate very poor colostrum quality i.e. low antibody levels



## Calf Collection

Calves ideally need to be picked up every 6 hours - this will create the opportunity to give them that colostrum within the golden window period of 6 hours. It will also reduce the risk of navel infections and remove calves from potential disease sources in the paddock or on the pad.

**Top Tip:** Take a trailer out every time you check on your springers, this makes frequent calf pick up much easier. Picking calves up more frequently will also reduce the number of calves that need to be transported and dealt with at any one time.

Trailers should contain bedding. Change this regularly as it quickly becomes contaminated with urine/faeces. The trailer should also provide protection from the wind - wrap a tarpaulin around the front and sides.

As well as tubing with colostrum, spray the calves' navels with a 10% spirit based iodine spray before loading them onto the trailer, and when you unload them at the calf shed.