

# Calf Link



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Calf Rearing Newsletter No. 3

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## WELCOME!

Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Calf Link for this season. I have started my calving tally, thanks to a Saturday night visit to Middlemarch and I'm sure many of you have some slips or early calving cows in milking already. So with calves around the corner, all your sheds and equipment now organised (I hope!), this newsletter is going to be focused on colostrum!

I hope those who attended last weeks calf rearing seminars found them to be of benefit and took home some new knowledge for this coming season. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of your questions and will take on board your suggestions for next year.

Remember, if you have specific questions you would like answered on any calf rearing topic, please email your name and contact details to Elspeth -[edunne@cluthavets.co.nz](mailto:edunne@cluthavets.co.nz) - and we will publish the answers in the next newsletter.



## Photo Competition

Thanks to all who have sent photos in, its early day yet so keep them coming for your chance to win a FACE Body and Beauty Gift Voucher valued up to \$100, thanks to MSD Animal Health.



Eleana and her pet calf Brie (Lynley Daly)



## HOT TIP #3

**All calves, replacement or otherwise, must receive 2 litres of good quality colostrum.**

### *What is colostrum?*

Colostrum is the first milk of a cow after calving. In comparison to normal milk it has:

- Immunoglobulins (Antibodies)
- 4 x more protein than normal milk
- More fat than normal milk
- Higher concentration of vitamins and minerals

So basically, colostrum is a high energy, high protein, antibody rich super milk that will get the calves off to the best start possible.

### ***Can you tell good colostrum from bad by looking at it?***

In short, the answer is no. Back in the old days (or not so old days), colostrum was assessed based on its colour, with deeper the yellow, the better the quality. The yellow colour comes from a vitamin called B-Carotene. It is what gives carrots, pumpkin and other fruits and vegetables their orange colour. The amount of B-Carotene in the milk doesn't give any indication of the amount of antibody in the milk. The best way to tell good quality colostrum is by measuring the antibody level in the colostrum. This can be most practically done on farm with a colostrometer.

***You can tell some cows that will have poor colostrum.***

This statement is correct to some extent. Heifers, inductions cows, and cows that come in with mastitis are not good candidates to keep colostrum from. However, there are other cows that we might not be able to identify that also may have low antibody levels in their colostrum. Cows that have been dripping milk pre-calving lose a lot of the antibodies that they have built up during the dry period. Generally, the cows considered to have the best colostrum are cows that are 3-5 years of age, not induced or diseased, that have not been dripping milk prior to calving.

***How much colostrum does a calf need?***

The golden rule is 10% of the calf's body weight, split into two feeds in the first 12 hours of life. In most situations, this is just not practical, so we say at 2L in the first 12 hours, which does mean you need to be picking calves up from the cows twice a day. Only 40% of calves left on the cow to have colostrum ever receive enough colostrum, so we can't rely on this method. Bottle feeding or tube feeding each calf 2L of good quality colostrum will ensure the calves receive the antibodies that they need.

***How is colostrum best stored?***

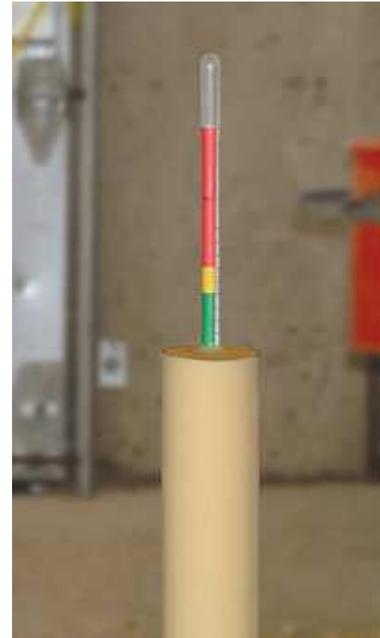
Don't waste excess colostrum. First milk colostrum can be frozen in bottles or zip lock bags to be defrosted in a hot water bath for those times where good quality colostrum is not available (early calves, late calves, etc).

First day colostrum should be kept separate and fed to first day calves and older if sufficient colostrum available. Days 2-4 and moderate quality colostrum can be mixed and stored through fermentation, as follows:

- Use a clean container with a lid, that is no more than 5000 litres.
- Use either a colostrum acidifier like "Nutricare" or a packet of Easi-yo to get the fermentation going.
- Keep below 20°C and out of sunlight.
- Stir the mixture twice daily.
- Keep for no more than 12 weeks.
- DO NOT store excessively bloody colostrum or colostrum from cows treated for mastitis.

# Product Promo!

## Kruuse Colostrum Densimeter



This colostrometer is a simple way to make sure that the colostrum you are feeding to your calves is high enough in antibodies. It is based on the principle that the higher the colostrometer floats, the more antibodies are present, read of a red/yellow/green scale. Green is high in antibodies, red is very low/poor and yellow falling somewhere in between. We recommend only feeding colostrum that measures in the green scale for your newborns and the yellow can be mixed with your 2-3 day colostrum. Colostrum that measures in the red end of the scale shouldn't be considered as colostrum but as just milk.

Kruuse Colostrum Densimeters are available from Shoof for \$45\*\* and are a cost effective way to make sure you're feeding the good stuff!

(\*\*Clutha Vets Members price – all members receive 10% retail price for veterinary recommended Shoof products).