



CLUTHA
VETS

Calf-Link



by Olivia Hickman & Sam Howarth

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Welcome to the next issue of Calf Link.

Colostrum plays a pivotal role in successful calf rearing.

In this issue we are discussing how to manage colostrum to achieve optimal results.



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4 Q's for Colostrum Management

- **Quality:** collect Colostrum within 12 hours of birth. Always test the quality using a Brix refractometer to assess antibody concentration (**Ideal >22%**)
- **Quickly:** Feed calves as soon as possible after birth—**ideally within 6 hours**
- **Quantity:** 10% of bodyweight needs to be fed - **ideally 4L**
- **sQueaky clean:** Collect colostrum in clean containers that have lids to help reduce bacterial contamination. Don't pool colostrum from different cows



Excellent hygiene practices are essential to maintain colostrum quality and minimise bacterial growth.

Bacteria bind to antibodies and interfere with antibody absorption in the calf's gut. This leads to lower immunity in these calves. Bacteria present in colostrum can also cause disease.

- Clean, disinfect and dry the cows teats before milking out colostrum
- Don't use colostrum from sick cows or cows suspected to have Johne's, Salmonella or M.bovis
- Discard colostrum that has been contaminated with faeces/urine
- Don't pool colostrum from different cows
- Ideally Colostrum needs to be refrigerated, however this can also be achieved on farm by storing it in a cool room (not the hot water cylinder room). Colostrum can be preserved with potassium sorbate—this is available from Clutha Vets
- All containers, teats and buckets need to be cleaned with detergent and hot water between collections/feedings



Can you improve some of these?

Factors affecting the quality of colostrum -

- **Length of dry period:** Dry period <5 weeks will decrease colostrum quality
- **Delay in first milking after calving** - quality declines rapidly after calving
- **Volume of colostrum at 1st milking** - High volumes (>8.5L) can mean lower quality—**ALWAYS** test colostrum
- **Vaccination of dam** - Vaccinating cows 3-6 weeks before calving will boost specific antibody levels
- **Age of dam** - Older cows generally produce better quality colostrum as they have had greater exposure to disease
- **Breed** - Jerseys tend to produce better quality colostrum because they produce lower volumes
- **Mastitis/High SCC** - Don't use colostrum that is stringy, flaky or bloody. High SCC cows can still produce good quality colostrum, **ALWAYS** test colostrum
- **Early calvers** - early calvers tend to produce colostrum with lower antibody levels