



From the desk of Dr. Chuck Roberts
May 1st, 2015

Spring greetings to all my fellow animal care givers!

Hopefully the warmth and sun of spring will shine on us for the next month. My family and I have taken on the responsibility of two milk calves and I feel an urge to share some of my experiences.

First off, not all calves share the same level of survival instinct. Some require help from us with basics including suckling milk from a bottle. It turns out not all calves do better on a bottle; or not all care givers are willing to spend 20 minutes feeding one calf. We now have one on a bucket and one using the bottle and both are performing nicely. Also, it is well documented that calves fed 3 times daily perform better. However, I can testify that calves can perform very well with twice daily feeding when proper nutrition is provided. Three feedings a day with consistency is hard to achieve. Average size calves have no problem consuming a gallon of milk twice daily. Often these calves are still hungry after the feeding and will drink a fair bit of water. They do not, however, start to eat much grain until they are 5-6 weeks old. Calves younger than that do not utilize energy from grain very well so it does not affect rate of gain. Older and healthy calves can handle inconsistencies in feeding but I consistently saw some level of indigestion problems. For this reason it is very clear to me why young and sick calves are affected so much from irregular volume, concentration, temperature, and timing of milk delivery. My patience was tested repeatedly feeding milk calves and I thank my wife and kids and progressive clients for keeping me on track with kind and quiet handling. At 7 weeks of age I see a trusting and calm disposition developing in the calves. Angry outbursts by me consistently force my daughter to back-track in training the calves. If we want quiet and trusting cows it very much starts with the calves. Projects in

the barn and aggressively approaching chores consistently stress the calves in the barn. Slowing down just a little and minimizing loud noises around the calves definitely makes them easier to work with. I experimented with a jack hammer, chain saw, skill saw, cement mixer and a lot of hammering and realized all affected the calves much more than I would normally notice. Not to worry, the kids regained trust quickly with halter walks and regular brushing. I now have a better understanding why my pasture raised beef calves are as wild as they tend to be. Hopefully in 10 or 15 years I can tell you that is going better also.

Remember, patience and calmness goes a very long way. Also a high plane of nutrition and clean dry bedding make up for other little inconsistencies. You cannot count on these factors alone when feeding larger numbers of calves. Remember this journey is for the long haul and mistakes can be overcome but must be learned from. We will always have much more to learn and should approach care giving calves with that in mind and always move forward.

Monthly Meetings.....

*Herdsmen Training
Ketosis and it's complications.
May 6th, 5:00 pm
60 E. Miller Rd, Sandusky.*

*Calf Housing Designs
Variations of the norm
May 20th, 5:00 pm
60 E. Miller Rd, Sandusky*

*RSVP is appreciated to 810-376-2425 or
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