



From the desk of Dr. Jarrett Gordon

Current Concepts for Calf Immunity

The world of calthood vaccination/immunity is ever-changing. The more we learn, the less we know. These notes are from a recent meeting with Dr. Vic Cortese, one of the nation's leading immunology experts.

The rule of thumb for vaccinating calves is to keep it simple! Less is more. Over-vaccinating leads to a shift in white blood cells leading to increased risk of disease. The stress of over-vaccinating is not worth the risk. How much is too much? That question is yet to be answered. We certainly see vaccine protocols where a calf gets a vaccine every week. This is too much. We know it takes three weeks to get peak titers after injectable vaccines. The calf needs time to recover from the energy draw it takes to make a proper vaccine titer response. So, how do we overcome this problem?

The answer is simple. Let the animals do what God created them to do! Colostrum is your number one vaccination for calves. We've long known how good the antibodies in colostrum are for calves and can correlate calf health with how much IgG they receive. We do this best by measuring total protein in the calf's serum at around three days old. 6.0 is now the standard to strive for. New research is showing us just how good the "rest" of colostrum is for calves as well. There are hormones, enzymes, and white blood cells in colostrum that set the calf up for a successful, productive life. This "perinatal programming" occurs by 3-4 days old. Research is supporting the feeding of colostrum for five days, not just the first feeding that has been the standard in dairy for 60 years. Think about how God designed this process. The cow doesn't just give colostrum the first milking. Of course it is diluted day by day, but the calves "in nature" will drink every bit of colostrum that cows make. We know the calf can't absorb much IgG by day two, but we're missing out on all these other

beneficial components by not feeding colostrum for five days. Think about how a beef calf looks at three months old compared to our dairy calves.

The other part of that story is how we feed our dairy calves. This has been a struggle for years! Two quarts twice a day is a starvation diet for most of the year here in Michigan. We need to be pushing the gas pedal down on these calves instead of holding them back. Three quarts twice daily is a good start. Most calves will easily drink a gallon twice a day. Three quarts three times a day is a good goal for everyone to strive for. Zoetis did a study several years ago that showed economic benefit for farms adding a third feeding per day, even if you paid the employee \$50/hour to do so. We give up so much potential just by underfeeding our calves. So, the lessons in this article are:

Don't Over-Vaccinate and Don't Under-Feed!!!

Let's work together to improve our calf health and mimic how God intended it to be. Merry Christmas! May you enjoy all the blessings this season brings and realize the true meaning of Christmas. A little Baby was born to save us all! Jesus was His name.

- **The last day to place a Dropship order for guaranteed delivery by Christmas is December 19.**
- **The clinic will be open until 1:00 pm on December 24 and closed on Christmas Day. As always, we have a doctor on call 24/7 for emergencies.**



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