



From the desk of Dr. Chuck Roberts, DVM

May 1, 2020

Spring is arriving and so far the weather is looking good for a strong start for the planting season. With spring I start to think about newborn calves since many of our resident beef herds will be calving at a high rate. Sunshine and warm weather are the key ingredient to a good start, but let's talk about something we have some control over. First off, we need to provide a clean dry space for calves to be born. For our beef calves being born outside, it is essential that there are accessible areas away from the mud and common areas that cows make such a mess of. If you utilize a barn for calving, make sure the cow has adequate space and fresh clean bedding to calve in. Manure contamination of the ground or the cow's udder are the biggest source of scours pathogens. Damp environments draw on the newborns energy reserves making it more difficult to fight off infections like scours, pneumonia, and blood infections. The calf's first meal, colostrum, is the only effective immune system that the calf can utilize for the first few weeks of life so make sure it is not contaminated by a manure-coated udder. Vaccines like Inforce 3 will help to prop up the immune system against respiratory disease, and vaccines like Calfguard and First Defense will supplement the immunity to scour bugs.

Proper nutrition is also essential to raising a healthy, vigorous calf. Make sure your brood cows have good milk in all four quarters. Visual exam of the udder goes a long way. Abnormal swellings and irregularities of the udder should be investigated more closely. Excessively small or large teats can also be a significant problem for the calf to overcome. Make sure to observe the calf daily for vigor and also watch the cow for evidence of the milk being removed from the udder. Supplementation of the calf is occasionally necessary, but can sometimes decrease the bond of the calf to the cow, so examination of the cows milk quantity and quality is important before supplementing the calf. Sometimes the calf may need additional help finding the milk especially if the teats are misshaped or the cow doesn't stand still for a less aggressive calf.

Providing protection against wind and rain will also prevent energy drains on the calf and will help to improve performance and decrease disease. Overcrowding or dirty conditions inside a shelter can outweigh the benefits of the shelters. If this is a problem, a solution may be to provide free areas for only calves to rest.

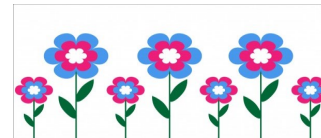
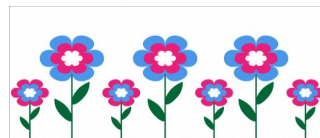
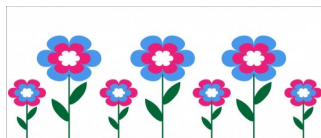
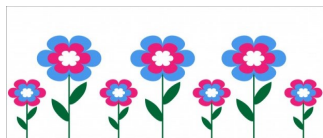
With this approach it is easier to maintain a clean and dry environment. The calves who need more protection can get it while cows who are used to being outside are not cramming into undersized spaces endangering their calves and creating an exceedingly poor environment for air quality and bedding.

As always, we are here to help with any problems you encounter and encourage you to allow us to help with management decisions and facility design and flow.

Stay healthy and hopefully we can enjoy the sunshine and warmth!



Hope you all are surviving this quarantine!



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