



# ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

January 26, 2018

## Calving is Not That Far Away...

I don't know where the time went, but it won't be long before calving season will be here again. When you think about it, you only get a limited number of attempts at growing a calf crop. Most of us hope to get at least 50 tries, but that really isn't very many. How can we make the most of each calving season?

### In a Nutshell:

- \* Get cows in good body condition prior to calving
- \* Keep cows off calving pastures until close to calving
- \* Feed Rumensin to cows to decrease coccidia in environment
- \* Rumensin improves feed efficiency of cow herd 8-10%
- \* Diamond V Yeast Culture improves colostrum quality
- \* Mineral and vitamin nutrition are key to herd health
- \* Use scours vaccines appropriately

**Get cows in good shape before calving.** We are getting down to the third trimester in many herds and it becomes more difficult to put weight on cows as they get closer to calving because nutrient requirements continue to increase. We need to supply more and more energy and protein to cows to add body condition as we get closer to calving. Hopefully we have the cows in at least a Body Condition Score of 5 now so we don't need to try to get them caught up in a very short amount of time. Keeping the cows in good shape will mean they will have healthier calves, increased quantity of higher quality colostrum, and be in better shape for rebreeding. Data shows that cows receiving poor nutrition prior to calving have decreased colostrum production compared to those that receive adequate nutrition before calving (see table from Selk, Oklahoma State University ANSI-3358).

Nutrition	Average Colostrum Yield (liters, 1 <sup>st</sup> milking)
Out Wintered: poor nutrition	0.6
In Wintered: silage ad lib	1.7

**Calve on clean ground.** Do not winter your cows where you calve if at all possible. Months of manure buildup contains lots of bacteria, viruses, and parasites like coccidia, cryptosporidia, and etc. Don't put the cows into the calving pasture until close to calving time. Clean ground means less manure and less chance for disease because of it. Splitting calving pastures or having a couple areas to calve is really helpful in stopping the spread of calfhood diseases. If you had the cows ultrasound pregnancy tested, you probably have a better idea of which calving group cows belong in, helping you to divide the cows into calving groups.

**Feed Rumensin to the cowherd.** Feeding Rumensin works to inhibit the life cycle of coccidia, which takes 17-21 days to complete. You should feed Rumensin for at least 30 days prior to calving to help clean up the coccidia in the cow. Ideally, you would have been feeding Rumensin for at least 30 days prior to moving the cows to the calving pasture. Rumensin is not effective against crypto. Feeding Rumensin will not cure every problem, but it has helped in a number of situations.

The other benefit of feeding Rumensin to the cows is the **improved feed efficiency**. An improvement of 8-10% in feed efficiency is the general expectation when delivering 200 mg/hd/d of Rumensin to the cows. Cows will have a voluntary drop in feed intake while maintaining body condition. Having the cows maintain their body condition on less feed is a valuable tool. Note that on the really cold days, cows will still have to increase their overall energy intake to maintain themselves because those colder temperatures mean increased nutrient requirements. You still need to increase your feed delivery accordingly or increase the energy in their ration.

## CALVING IS NOT THAT FAR AWAY...

**Colostrum production starts long before calving.** Colostrum quality and intake has a major impact on the calf for the remainder of its life. Poor colostrum intake can set calves up for a lifetime of problems. Good colostrum can set calves up for success. The Diamond V Yeast Culture in our Ultimate Breeder minerals and the Cow Balancer R800 DV helps improve colostrum quality. Research shows that there is an improvement in immunoglobulin concentration in the colostrum and that the immune index in the calf is enhanced when Diamond V has been fed to the dam.

**Mineral nutrition prior to calving is also key.** Trace mineral deficiencies in the cow can translate to the calf. And, making sure the cows have a high quality mineral program in place helps cows begin cycling sooner after calving so the chances of breeding back on time are improved. Vitamin A and E are included in a complete mineral and these are also critical to supply to the cow because they are concentrated in the colostrum to deliver to the calf. Vitamin A and E do not cross the placenta to the fetus, so making sure cows have good supplies prior to calving helps develop higher concentrations in the colostrum that the calf will need. A deficiency in Vitamin A in calves is associated with increased risk of scours, so it really is critical to supply to the calf. With vitamin prices taking a big increase, we recommend you try to buy what you need just for your more immediate needs. Buying just what you need now will allow you to take advantage of a price decrease if and when that happens.

If you are going to **vaccinate cows with a scours vaccine**, it needs to be done according to label, typically at least 3 weeks prior to calving. Not every cow-calf operation does this, but if you have had scours issues in the past, it is a good idea to use a vaccine. This helps build antibodies in the colostrum to pass on to the calf. The calf has to consume the colostrum to be protected from scours organisms. It is a good idea to have at least one package of a **colostrum replacer** (not a colostrum supplement) on hand in case you have a calf in need of colostrum. The best products are strictly from bovine colostrum because they have the same combination of immunoglobulins as maternal colostrum. Products made from serum or whey do not have the same composition of immunoglobulins as colostrum, making them less effective at providing the calf the protection it needs. The Land O'Lakes colostrum replacer is tested to prevent the failure of passive transfer that can occur when calves get inadequate colostrum.

**Prior preparation prevents poor performance.** Make sure the cows are in good body condition, supply a quality mineral and vitamin package, feed Rumensin to help improve your feed efficiency, and talk to your vet about a vaccination program and if any newborn calf products should be used in your herd. A little preparation now can help us put healthy calves on the ground in a couple of months and get the cows ready for the next breeding season. It will be here before you know it.

*Roxanne Knock, PhD*

### What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- \* Remember to **HEAT TAPE lines on liquid systems**- this keeps the line fluid. C&R Supply has videos on how to maintain the John Blue pumps at <http://www.crsupply.com/index.php/products/liquid-feed/>
- \* Get prepared for calving- get chains, OB sleeves, lube, and calf puller in place and *colostrum replacement* on hand
- \* Get Stress tubs for the first and second calf heifers before calving
- \* Feed Rumensin to the cows to improve feed efficiency and to limit environmental coccidiosis prior to calving
- \* Check with your Livestock Production Specialist to see if your ration is meeting the calves' needs and matching up with your feed resources
- \* Check your water source and make sure it is not freezing up- poor water intake can limit performance
- \* Set up a herd health plan for vaccinations, de-worming program, and treatment protocols with your veterinarian
- \* Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly