



ON FEED

A newsletter of Dakotaland Feeds

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Investing in Your Calves

It is the time of year to start weaning spring-born calves. And after this spring, we are about to put calves through the 2nd most stressful day of their life. It pays to do this job right and get the calves the off to the best start possible.

Water is critical. Water intake is critical for feed intake. Calves that do not drink, will not eat and intakes will be very low. Some calves have never had to drink from an automatic water fountain, so finding water may be a challenge for them. Allowing the water to run over *a little* may help those calves find water and start drinking, which is important to establishing feed intake. Make sure you have cleaned the water tanks and have a high quality source of water. Water with high TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) or sulfates can make the calves loose, making it difficult to read how you are doing delivering feed. Make sure the calves have adequate access to water. General recommendations are for at least 1" of linear drinking space per head. At weaning and during heat stress that can go as high as 3" per head to ensure adequate intake. Place Stress Tubs near the fence and water source to help stimulate intake in bawling calves.

Feeding. Make sure you have adequate bunk space. Generally, 12-14 inches per head is recommended for twice a day feeding and 18 inches or more for once daily feeding. One key is to have feed in the bunk before the calves are in the pen. If the calves walk up to an empty bunk the first time and don't yet realize that the tractor means feed, they don't have much incentive to go back to the bunk. Long stem hay in the bunks before the calves is a good way to bring the calves to the bunk. It can be topped with a couple pounds of ration. Long stem hay can be continued for 1-3 days depending on the stress level and readiness of the calves to eat. Starting to top the hay with 1% of the calves bodyweight in ration dry matter is a good place to start. Feeding twice daily on the starter is often recommended because it can help eliminate potential issues. Since the starter is a higher roughage ration more apt to sorting, especially as calves come up on feed, feeding twice daily can help reduce the sorting. Calves that have had access to creep feed will start on feed easier and quicker than calves that have not had access to creep feed.

Moving calves up on feed. When moving starting calves up on feed, a guide is to increase feed delivery by about 2.0 lbs/hd as-is when the bunk is cleaned up and then stay at that level for 2-3 days before increasing again. If you continue to increase feed deliveries every day, you can overshoot the calves and cause them to crash on intake. By waiting a day or two to move the calves, you allow the rumen to adjust to a higher intake level. A good target is to have the calves eating approximately 3% of their bodyweight on a dry-matter basis by 21 days on feed. The first 2% may come pretty easy, but you need to be more careful as total intakes increase. Because every group of calves will start a little differently, you will need to read both the bunks and the cattle to determine if they are ready to move up on feed again. A clean bunk but uninterested cattle mean you probably need to stay at the feed delivery you are at.

Follow the batch sheets! When you get batch sheets, they are set up to keep all of the nutrients at the appropriate levels. Yes, the approximate feeding rate of your supplement may be 1.0/lb/hd/d. However, in order to keep the protein, mineral, and medication levels at the calculated levels, you need to follow the batch sheets as the

In a Nutshell:

- * **Starting calves right at weaning is a critical time**
- * **Water is critical; have drinking space of 1" per head**
- * **Start with some long stem hay for the first 1-3 days**
- * **Move calves 2.0 lbs/hd/d when moving up on feed**
- * **Follow the batch sheets**
- * **Use a quality Stress Care starter product**
- * **Use appropriate medicated feed additives**

INVESTING IN YOUR CALVES

calves move up on feed. The same goes for the roughage. The energy value has been calculated according to the ratios and so adding more roughage or more grain CHANGES the energy concentration of the ration. That is not what we want to be doing with these starting calves. We need consistency for the rumen so the calves don't get acidosis.

Invest in your calves. The starting period is critical and if you plan to own your calves for a while, it will pay to spend \$6 on a quality starting program vs \$30 or more treatment costs. The reason we have specific starter products is because stressed calves have higher nutrient requirements than already started calves. Even if you are just starting your own calves, co-mingling calves from different pastures can bring on stress, as will the separation from mamma. Stress means we need higher trace mineral levels and a higher quality trace mineral so the calves have the best chance to respond to the vaccinations or antibiotics that you administer. It has been shown repeatedly that a high quality starter program reduces overall treatment costs. Zinpro trace minerals, which are the zinc and copper amino acid complexes, are the highest quality trace minerals available and that is why they are in the Stress Care Starter products.

Diamond V Yeast Culture is another additive that is in the Stress Care products. The Diamond V Yeast Culture helps enhance fiber digestion and also is stimulatory to the immune system. Research has shown fewer pulls when Diamond V is included in the starter program along with better intakes. It is another way that you are investing in your calves up front to prevent problems later on.

Appropriate medicated feed additives. The appropriate medication is an important part of your starter program. Aureomycin, Bovatec, Rumensin, or Deccox all have their place in starters. Aureomycin is a very effective antibiotic to help control pneumonia in feedlot calves, but it is only approved for use in combination with Bovatec. Remember, Aureomycin is not cleared to be in the bunk at the same time as Rumensin according to the FDA. You may choose to run a 14-28 day starter with Bovatec and Aureomycin and then switch to Rumensin at a later time. Deccox fits some natural programs. Rumensin is particularly useful to help prevent bloat if you are feeding higher amounts of alfalfa. Rumensin, Bovatec, and Deccox are all effective at controlling coccidiosis when included from day 1. You can get your VFD before you wean the calves so when the medication is necessary, you have it available to use.

Starting calves can sometimes be a challenge, but it is vital to performance down the road because calves never really get over a bad start. Take the time to invest in your calves during the starting phase to help get the calves off to the best start possible. It will be well worth your time and money. We can fit every feeding program from a low-inclusion supplement to a complete feed program or anything in between. Ask your Dakotaland Feeds representative about the Stress Care starter program that best fits your needs.

Rexanne Knock, PhD

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

- ***Order your Stress Care for weaning-** planning ahead will help ensure you have it when you need it!
- *Continue **creep feed** for your spring born calves or consider switching to Ration Manager
- *Get your fall vaccination protocol or receiving protocol set with your veterinarian
- *Clean water tanks prior to weaning, check pens and perform maintenance
- *Feed *Altosid* to control horn fly populations until the first frost
- *Get mineral out to the cattle since forages are deficient in many trace minerals
- *Talk to your veterinarian about ultrasounding or pregnancy checking your replacement heifers
- *Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly
- *Get 30-13 tubs for grazing crop residue for protein supplementation

Thought for the Day: PLAN AHEAD- It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark!