

Calf raising protocol at Victory Farms Millbank, South Dakota

Calf health stats

Number of calves on milk = 506

Average age at weaning = 7 weeks

Average daily gain = 1.5-1.55 lbs.

Scours cases treated weekly = 10-12 with electrolytes; <1 with antibiotics

Mortality rate = 3.7%

Comments:

We milk 3,100 Jersey cows and raise all of our own replacement heifers. Currently, we have 3,600 heifers. Calves receive 1 gallon of pasteurized, high-quality colostrum right after birth.

Calves are fed WarmFront (26/16) Jersey milk replacer from May 1 to October 31 and ColdFront (26/20) Jersey milk replacer the rest of the year. For the first 10 to 14 days, depending on when the calf was born, calves are fed 2-quart bottles of milk replacer three times a day. After that, they receive 3-quart bottles of milk replacer three times a day. At 35 to 40 days, the calves only receive one 3-quart milk feeding and by 47 to 50 days, the calves are completely off of milk.

From day one, calves are offered water in buckets and starter. For the first two weeks, they insert a bowl in the calf's starter bucket to make it easier for them to eat and reduce waste. The calves seem to eat more using this method.

The calves stay in hutches for two to three more weeks before being put into group pens.

Day 0

CALF DISEASE PREVENTION

Comments: Raising calves in the harsh climate of South Dakota has plenty of challenges. At Victory Farms, a high plane of nutrition and a number of key preventative measures help to keep calves not only healthy, but thriving all year long.

Newborn care

Feeding and weaning

At birth

Product:

Inforce 3

Active ingredient:

Modified live Virus – BRSV, IBR and PI3 strains

Route:

Intranasal

Comments: Use this to vaccinate calves against bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and parainfluenza type 3 (PI3). They give this to the calf before they leave the maternity area to help jumpstart their immune system and protect them as soon as possible.

Day 2 to 21

Product:

Electrolytes

Comments: Calves are moved to the hutch on day two. At this point they start to receive a 3-quart bottle of electrolytes after their second feeding each day. Only the youngest 150 calves receive them so calves stop getting them at two to three weeks old depending on how heavily the dairy is calving. Electrolytes are fed as needed after that. Since implementing this protocol in April, they have not given one antibiotic shot.

Week 5

Product:

One Shot

Active ingredient:

Killed bacterial culture plus a toxoid

Route:

Subcutaneous

Comments: Protects calves against bovine pneumonic pasteurellosis caused by *Mannheimia haemolytica* type A1.

Week 9 or 10

Product:

Inforce 3

Active ingredient:

Modified live Virus – BRSV, IBR and PI3 strains

Route:

Intranasal

Comments: Calf receives a second dose to boost its protection against bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and parainfluenza type 3 (PI3). This is given to the calf when she leaves the hutch.

*Always consult with your veterinarian about use of products as doses may differ according to animal needs, challenges and location.