

# Neonatal Calf Rearing Checklist

## Staff/Communication:

- Pre-season meeting with all relevant staff to plan calf management system
- Regular scheduled team meetings
- Whiteboard/notebooks/spray paint etc to keep reliable records
- Go through a gear checklist to ensure you have what you need before the season starts
- Train staff in procedures such as tubing calves, spraying/checking navels, handling etc

## Cow Preparation:

- Cows in good calving condition, with dated pregnancies for improved planning
- Dry period of at least 6 weeks to allow high quality colostrum to be produced
- Vaccination at the right time to improve colostrum quality if needed

## Calf Collection and Storage:

- Pick up calves from paddock twice daily
- Spray/dip navels with alcohol-based iodine
- Physically clean trailer and spray with disinfectant twice weekly
- Space on trailer 1m<sup>2</sup>/calf, drive slowly and pick up small groups if necessary

## Colostrum Collection and Storage:

- Collection buckets/vats/equipment cleaned prior to season starting
- Twice daily cow collection and milking of freshly calved cows
- Before first milking, cow teats cleaned properly (eg teatwipes)
- First milking (TRUE COLOSTRUM) Brix-grade checked (every cow) and separated properly
- Second-Eighth milking (TRANSITION MILK) stored separately, ideally refrigerated

## First Colostrum Feeding:

- 2x 2-3L feeds of Brix-grade 1 colostrum in the first 12 hours of life
- (2x 2L if suckling, 2x 3L if tubing calves)
- Keep good records of this happening e.g. whiteboard, spray paint calves

## Continued Colostrum Feeding:

- Keep feeding colostrum for at least 4 days
- Consider ad-lib feeding of colostrum

### **Housing:**

- Solid barriers between calf pens (even fixed tarps over fences better than nothing)
- Ventilation – at calf height should be draught-free but above calf height should be free-flowing
- MINIMUM of 1.5m<sup>2</sup>/calf and maximum 20 calves per pen
- All-in/all-out system
- Adequate bedding (20-30cm++) and topped up regularly
- Separate bobby calf pen, away from replacement pens
- Separate sick calf pen, away from replacements

### **Hygiene:**

- Virucidal spray twice weekly
- Check water sources daily and clean if necessary
- Rodent and bird control
- Clean milk/colostrum feeding equipment twice daily
- Sick calf pen cleaned and sprayed daily with virucidal/protozoal-killing spray

### **Feeding:**

- Use one brand of milk replacer
- Avoid sudden changes in diet – make changes/increases gradually
- Monitor nutritional scours closely
- Use feeding time to be observant of calves (potential sick calves)
- Ad-lib meal access from week 1, ad-lib fibre (eg hay) from day 1
- Access to clean water – check it is available/flowing twice daily

### **Recognition and Management of Sick Calves:**

- Consider doing a group check of healthy calves for colostrum transfer
- Use feeding time as a chance to observe calf behaviour/demeanor/navels
- Check temp of anything suspicious (Note >39.5=fever)
- Isolate and treat sick calves as soon as possible
- Mark/tag treated calves
- Call vet early for advice and/or a visit if concerned/indicated