

Vol. 36 No. 336

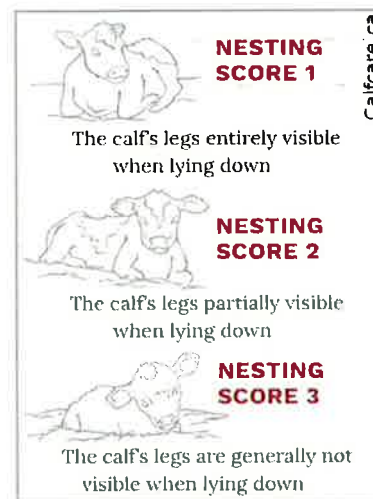
January 2022

Winter Weather - Preparing Your Animals and Farm for a Successful Season

As we celebrate the start of a New Year we know that we're in for at least a few months of snow and cold temperatures before spring arrives. This month's newsletter touches on some of the things to keep in mind to manage the challenges colder weather poses for your animals.

Calves

Bedding: Keep your calves warm and dry to prevent respiratory disease and keep up a decent growth rate during winter. Calves spend up to 20 hours a day laying down and can lose heat through their legs which have no insulating layers of fat. This is why one of the best methods for keeping a calf warm is to bed them deep with straw which allows them to nestle down deep enough to bury their legs. When calves are laying down, you shouldn't be able to see their legs. Usually 3-4 inches of shavings topped with 12 inches of straw is ideal. You can also do the knee test to make sure the bedding isn't wet. Kneel down for 30 seconds and when you stand up if your knees are wet or have manure/bedding build up on them, you need to add more bedding. If you are using a different bedding material (eg. shavings) then it can be very difficult to consistently achieve a nesting score of 3 and in that case, consider using calf coats to give better heat retention. For 1-3 week old calves the threshold is consistent temperatures below 10°C and for 3+ week old calves the threshold is below 5°C. The goal is to provide warmth without inducing sweating which paradoxically chills the calf.



Towels: A quick way to help newborn calves start life on the right hoof is to rub them dry with clean dry towels, which also serves to fluff up their hair coat and retain heat like a down jacket.

Colostrum: Veterinarians are always talking on and on about the immunity benefits of early good quality colostrum, and that's important but the other significant component is the high fat content which provides calves with high energy boost before the internal fat reserve that they are born with gets used up.

Feeding: Calves need more groceries with the extra energy going into maintaining body temperature. There are several ways to get more solids into the calf: Feed more frequently (add a feeding), feed more volume per feeding, or increase the solids content. There are limits to both volume and how high you can safely increase milk-replacer-water mix ratios before causing scour issues so please talk with your nutritionist or veterinarian to develop a strategy for getting more milk solids into your calves. Calf starters also provide nutrients necessary for growth, so be sure each calf has fresh, palatable and high-quality starter available at all times.

Hutches: Position them with the doorway facing away from the prevailing wind, preferably protected by a wind-break. Repair any holes in the hutches to avoid undesirable drafts.

Water: Despite the challenges of doing this in a Canadian winter, calves should have access to water above and beyond their milk/milk replacer feedings because it is important for rumen development and improves average daily gains. Calves have a preference about water temperature too: calves drink more water when they are offered warm water (20°C). You can offer warm water immediately after calves are finished with their



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milk and then empty pails after 10 minutes to prevent from freezing, or alternatively offer warm water for short periods daily at times separate from feeding, but be consistent about timing so they get used to the routine.

Electrolytes: Have an ample supply of electrolytes on hand in the event of scours so the calves can be kept hydrated.

Ventilation: We all know drafts are bad, but a tightly closed barn can also be a recipe for pneumonia when air quality is poor. Calves housed indoors need a space with at least 4 air exchanges per hour so make sure your fans are clean and functioning properly and check your positive-pressure tubes for damage, and repair or replace if necessary.



Cows

Vaccination: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. So take the time to make sure your vaccination program is up to date and is being carried out as originally laid out by your veterinarian. Some farms choose to add in additional intranasal vaccines during higher risk winter months if they aren't already using them year-round, so discuss options with your herd veterinarian.

Teats: Select a proper teat post-dip for winter use that avoids freezing and has higher emollient levels to reduce chapping and cracked teat ends which lead to increased risk of mastitis.

Ventilation: Check to be sure curtains close properly and there are no openings that could create a draft. Check windows, doors or inlets to make sure they are properly closed.

Humans

Not only is it important for you to have a plan to keep your cows and calves prepared for the winter months, but you and/or your employees need proper gear as well. You will be less likely to hurry through important health or production tasks if you are comfortable, and you will be more likely to take time to observe your animals for early signs of disease, heats etc. This investment in equipment might include insulated boots, jackets, gloves, coveralls, and/or waterproof bibs for milking.

Stay safe and stay warm!

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Covid-19 protocols

With the presence of Covid-19 in Ontario, our team is taking additional precautions during our farm visits, as highlighted below, to help mitigate the spread of this disease in our community. We have chosen to continue strict precautions as we move through Ontario's phased reopening. Please be aware that as this pandemic develops, we may have to adjust our procedures in response.

Veterinary farm visits

- Once on farm, we will try to maintain a distance of at least six feet from people wherever practically possible
- Care will be taken to wash and disinfect hands and contacted tools and equipment before re-entering our vehicle
- A mask will be worn whenever practically possible, especially in closed air spaces or when physical distancing is not possible. We would like our clients to do the same while we are on farm.

Technician farm visits

- Techs will continue to assist veterinarians as necessary. The same precautions as above will apply
- Technicians will continue to provide services, such as dehorning, but we ask that no farm personnel are in the immediate vicinity during their visit

Clinic procedures

- Our clinic will remain open, but business hours may be subject to change
- Clients will be met at the door by one of our customer care representatives
- Purchases will be set out at the door
- Laboratory samples will be received at the door

If you have experienced any Covid-like symptoms or have had exposure to someone with symptoms, we urge you to please notify us before your next vet visit so we can take the appropriate precautions.

We thank you for assistance in helping us continue to provide veterinary care while considering the health of yourselves and our staff.

Stay healthy!

