

# Sour Colostrum - One Way To Feed Calves

by N. Alan Bair  
Assistant County Agent  
The feeding of sour colostrum to calves has allowed many county dairymen to cut the cost of calf raising and raise healthier calves. Not too surprisingly, the reports of

success with sour colostrum feeding far outnumber the reports of disappointments. With the rising cost of milk replacer and the increased value of whole milk, sour colostrum has many economic as well as nutritional advantages over other accepted calf feeding

practices.

A side benefit of feeding sour colostrum is that it has solved the problem of proper disposal of this large volume of otherwise unusable milk for many dairymen.

A good producing cow will give enough surplus colostrum in the first eight

like calves, really like this soured material.

Although there is some disagreement among users, there seems to be no need to stir the contents of the fermenting can daily. Fill it up and set it aside to ferment. It is possible to begin feeding at once if there is no other colostrum available.

It is recommended that the fermented colostrum be stored no longer than 30 days. The mold that sometimes forms on the surface during fermentation and on the container sides during feeding seems to have no adverse effects on the calf. Of course, thoroughly wash and sanitize the container before refilling.

At feeding time the container of fermented colostrum must be stirred thoroughly to mix the fat, curds and whey. One quart of sour colostrum and one quart of hot water is the mixture most often used. Depending on the colostrum supply, other ratios can be used. In any case, do not feed more than eight to ten pounds of the mixture per day during the first week. As with any calf feeding program, it is better to underfeed than overfeed in early life. Nipple bottles or pails are usually found to be more satisfactory than open pails for feeding. Calves like sour colostrum, but some object to the different smell.

After one week of age you should provide a source of extra water for the calf. Wait an hour or so after feeding the milk to put water in the calf bucket. If a little hungry, the calf will eat grain and not fill up on water.

Feeding sour colostrum is one method of feeding calves that works. Even with this method the mother's milk should be fed fresh to the calf for the first three days. And, as with any other system, proper care and careful management of the calf have no substitutes.

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milking to feed the calf for four or five weeks. With bull calves being sold, most dairymen report enough colostrum available to feed future herd replacements to weaning age.

Research reports indicate that sour milk-fed calves develop a better digestive system. Calves fed soured milk have a different bacterial make-up in the gastrointestinal tract: the bacterial "good guys" predominate and there are fewer "bad guys" present. Organisms that commonly cause enteritis and scouring cannot grow at the pH of sour colostrum and are thus eliminated as a cause of those diseases.

Sour colostrum feeding also affects the size of curds formed in the stomach which is related to ease of digestion. When fresh milk is ingested, the curd particles formed may be the size of a walnut, while the curd from soured milk resembles grain size particles which are more easily digested.

The mechanics of feeding sour colostrum are rather simple. The first eight milkings are put in a container, fermented, and the calf is fed from the container for the next six to eight weeks. In no case should colostrum containing antibiotics be used.

In practice it is best to use at least three containers: one to feed out of, one that is fermenting and one to be filling. Always use the oldest container first. Many dairymen have found twenty gallon plastic garbage cans to be ideal fermenters. These cans are not too large to move, come with tight fitting lids and are easy to clean.

The ideal fermenting temperature is probably between 60 degrees and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. This means your fermenting container should not sit in direct sunlight. A tight lid is necessary on the container to prevent flies, rats and cats from getting in. Yes, cats,



Dairymen are learning that healthy, scour-free calves like this one can be

raised on a diet of sour colostrum.

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## Thomasville Club Elects Officers

The Thomasville 4-H Club met recently at the 4-H Center near Bair. All leaders and teen leaders were recognized for the work they did for the club in 1973.

The members elected officers for 1974. They are as follows: president—Christine Kulynych; vice-president—Jonathan Uhl; secretary—Bonnie Wire; treasurer—Tim Eisenhart; news reporter—Tommy Welsh; ass't. news reporter—Katherine Uhl; song leader—Nancy Kulynych; ass't. song leader—Nancy Logue; game leader—Jeff Roth; and ass't. game leader—Betty

Rauhauser.

Mrs. Harris Horn talked on the projects for the year. Members filled out IBM forms after the meeting.

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