

Pipeline

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also be needed, especially with this year's poorer quality forage and the suppressed immunity levels it has caused in some cows. You may want to discuss these matters with your veterinarian and nutritionist along with the possible need for immunizations, hoof trimming, deworming, etc.

To prevent milk fever and reproductive problems, avoid excessive intake of calcium and protein by limiting legume intake to about 30-50% of the total forage dry matter intake. Good quality grass hay or mixed hay is preferred.

Pastures are a good source of forage and fresh grass can be richer in vitamins and minerals than stored feeds. Pastures also offer cows an opportunity for

more exercise and a reprieve from concrete stress.

If most of the forage is chopped or ensiled, a few pounds of long-stemmed dry hay will help to encourage good rumen activity and a more normal rumen pH.

If the lactating herd receives non-protein nitrogen (NPN), be sure to feed some NPN to dry cows and springing heifers, starting several weeks before calving, to acclimate their digestive system to it.

Close-Up Group

Dry cows and springing heifers need special attention about 2-3 weeks before calving. They should be put into a close-up pen where they can be properly fed and observed.

During this time cows need to be gradually acclimated to slightly higher levels of grain intake and to some of the same kinds of feed they'll be receiving after calving.

You might want to keep cows on their dry cow program and use lactating ration ingredients for the additional feeds fed.

In order to preserve appetites and prevent other calving time problems, limit total grain intake to about 0.5% of body weight. For a Holstein cow this would be about 7-8 pounds per day. Hold the cow at these levels for a few days after calving. When the cow starts recovering from the stresses of calving, withdraw the dry cow ration ingredients and carefully increase daily intakes in accordance with appetite, and always be sure the cow is consuming generous amounts of forage.

The close-up pen, and especially the maternity area, should be clean. As at drying off time, our goal is to protect the teat ends from exposure to infectious organisms. We also have two other things to protect, the cow's uterus and the calf's navel.

As the cow bags up she may start leaking milk. That means the protective keratin plug in the teat canal has popped and the door at the end of the teat is again somewhat open to invading organisms. The milk that leaks out is also a good growth media for mastitis organisms. If the cow lies down in a milk contaminated area, on in any filthy area, she is a sitting duck for infection. Sanitation is very important at this time.

If a cow starts leaking milk before calving consider pre-milking her, milking her out completely and regularly and saving the colostrum for her unborn calf. It'll prevent milk contamination of the pen. It'll help relieve udder pressure and improve circulation and it will help to flush out infectious organisms that may have already gained entrance into the udder. However, you may increase the risk of milk fever, but that might be easier to prevent or

treat than mastitis or a broken down udder.

To help the calf get off to a rousing start separate it from the dam at birth, dry it off, place it in a clean pen away from older cattle, cut and dip it's navel and feed it colostrum soon after birth. Separating the calf from its dam immediately at birth helps to prevent it from coming in contact with manure from older cattle and possibly picking up Johne's disease organisms. With this same concern in mind, clean and sanitize the dam's udder before getting colostrum for the calf.

Remember, the efforts you put into your heifer and dry cow programs is an investment you will have to live with for a full lactation. Hopefully, it will be a good experience.


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