

CALVING EASE

December 1995 (Revised Jan '04)

Sam Leadley (Attica Veterinary Associates) and Pam Sojda (Offhaus Farms)

Looking Ahead to The New Year

New Year's resolutions? Give me a break; it's not even Christmas yet! Well, this is not about resolutions. It is about setting goals for The New Year. Right about now we all have a pretty good idea how things are going to turn out for this year. Things like rate of calf mortality, how much time it took to vaccinate calves and cost of calf starter.

One challenge we all face is trying to make next year a better one than those years before. Without thinking about goals we are less likely to reach "better." Sometimes goals deal with output (mortality, sickness, weight gain). Other times it makes sense to set goals dealing with inputs (time, materials, costs, labor). But, without goals we are unlikely to see improvement - as one person said, "If you don't know where you want to end up, you sure aren't likely to get there."

We set goals pretty informally. We talk about what we'd like to see next year. For example, Sam's talked about reducing the rate of pneumonia in calves at weaning time. Pam wants to work out a better routine for feeding grain on weekends to achieve less over and underfeeding. Sam would like to move calves out of his hutches at least a week earlier in next year. Pam's talked about setting up a more labor-efficient facility in her springer barn for bull calves waiting to go to market.

Sharing goals with your supervisor (or owner/operator) is important, too. That way they can better understand where you are coming from. When Sam wants to spend more dollars on vaccines, his boss needs to know that Sam is trying to reduce the pneumonia cases at weaning. When Pam wants to put dividers in the large bull-calf pen in her springer barn, her boss needs to know that Pam is trying to improve labor efficiency for calf feeding.

New Year's resolutions? No, just ordinary thoughts about how we'd like things to be in the New Year.

ENERGY

Why more energy in cold weather? Our calves have to maintain a constant body core temperature. They do this by burning the energy we feed them. If our feeding program supplies too little energy, then the calves use energy stored in body tissues such as fat and muscle.

But, how much is "more?" The arithmetic is clear. Most of us feed two quarts of milk or milk replacer twice a day. In winter weather 20 degrees or below many recommendations suggest a twenty to twenty-five percent increase in energy fed. Twenty-five percent more is an extra pint both AM and PM feedings.

For every ten calves fed we normally would feed twenty quarts of milk each feeding (five gallons). This twenty-five percent increase equaling one pint per calf adds a total of five more quarts for every ten calves fed. For example, a fifty calf operation would jump from twenty-five gallons per feeding to thirty-one plus gallons.

Why all this arithmetic? We often think of "more" as adding just a little; maybe an extra gallon or two per feeding. In the case of winter feeding for calves, just a "little more" can be not enough. How much per feeding would it take to increase your energy intake twenty-five percent?

In Sam's operation, he increases energy fed by milk only for the calves under three weeks of age - that is, for the calves that are not yet eating very much calf starter. Older calves seem to just eat more grain to make up the necessary energy needed for cold weather.

CALF FEEDERS TIP

For Sam and Pam cold weather means frozen water. During winter months we drag hoses to stock tanks to manually fill them. Then, the heifers have a new toy. Fun - chew on the hose! Pull it out of the tank. Watch the water flood the pen!

Pam's solution to these heifer pranks? Put a 18" long galvanized pipe over the end of the hose. It's heavy enough to resist the heifers' efforts to drag the hose out of the stock tank.

Details? Choose metal pipe just large enough for the hose to fit through. Keep the pipe from sliding off the end of the hose by fastening a plastic hose coupler on the end. Any type of plastic hose fitting will work as long as it squeezes tightly on the hose and is a larger diameter than the inside of the pipe.

If you know of someone that doesn't currently receive **Calving Ease** but would like to, tell them to **WRITE** to Calving Ease, 11047 River Road, Pavilion, NY 14525 or to **CALL** either 585-591-2660 (Attica Vet Assoc. office) or 585-343-8128 (Offhaus Farms Office) or **FAX** (585-591-2898) or **e-mail** sleadley@frontiernet.net or pams91@2ki.net . A limited number of back issues may be accessed on the Internet at www.calfnotes.com and clicking on the link, Calving Ease.