



### PREVENTING SCOURS.

Many dairy farmers believe that calf scours are an inevitable part of raising calves. This is not true – sick and dead calves are a sign that calf management on the dairy is not optimal.

There are several key steps to minimising the occurrence of scours.

Some people regard them as too time consuming to be bothered with; these are the same people with high mortality rates in their calves, high morbidity rates and poor heifer growth rates.

If you read this list and think to yourself that you are already doing all these things, then it is likely that you have very few sick calves and rarely have a dead calf. If you are not doing some or any of these steps, implementing them is likely to improve your calf health.

1. Vaccinate all cows at dry off for diseases which are likely to cause problems in your area.
2. Take care of the health & nutrition of pre-calving cows to minimise dystocia incidence.
3. Calve cows in a clean area.
4. Ensure that calves get at least 10% of their birth weight in clean, high quality colostrum within the first 6 hours of life.
5. Feed sufficient clean milk or milk replacer to allow growth rates of at least 0.5kg/day. For the average 40kg Holstein calf, this will be 5l fresh milk or 625g milk replacer.
6. Clean all feeding and milk carting equipment thoroughly after each use.
7. Keep the calf bedding clean, ensure the barn is well ventilated but not draughty and minimise flies and rodents in the calf barn and feed storage areas.
8. Minimise stress in calves.
9. Feed ad-lib fresh grain or pellets + free choice water to calves, from at least day 3, to provide extra nutrition as the calf grows.

All these steps are inter-related and therefore need to be implemented together to be effective. However, if one step was to be singled out as being the most important, it would be ensuring that calves get an adequate amount of clean, high quality colostrum soon after birth; in today's larger dairies, assuming the calf drunk enough colostrum from its dam is not effective.