



## Spring Calf Nutrition Tips

### Optimizing Performance During Seasonal Change

As spring approaches bringing the increased stressors of rainy/wet conditions and greater temperature fluctuations, ensuring the well-being of your dairy calves shifts from providing extra energy to maintain good body condition and growth during the cold winter months to preparing for the hot summer months to come. The wetter and variable temperatures of spring, combined with occasional spells of heat stress, can have a significant impact on calf health, growth rates, and farm profitability.

Don't let this transitional season catch you off guard. Review these tips and strategies for ensuring your dairy calves are prepared to thrive as they navigate the variable weather and head into heat stress season. Early detection of stress signs allows for prompt intervention and management, but don't wait for the signs...be proactive in preventing and preparing calves to handle any stress that may come their way.

### Strategies to prepare for fluctuating and rising temperatures

#### Maintain Consistency in Feeding

Springtime weather may be variable from day to day, but making sure the calf feeding program is consistent helps to prevent stress and keeps calves growing and healthy. Consistency in feeding means that calves are both fed at the same time and are fed the same thing every day. Attention to detail, including using scales and thermometers, when mixing and feeding milk is necessary to make sure that the solids levels and temperature of the milk are the same every day.

#### Proper Nutrition

Proper nutrition is vital for resilience against stress. Calves need to be fed milk and starter that are both formulated with high quality, readily available ingredients that provide calves with the nutrients they need to both grow quickly and stay healthy even when there are environmental stressors.

NurseTrate® milk replacers are excellent milk replacers made up of high quality ingredients that are easily digested by calves to provide them with the nutrition they need during fluctuating temperatures. Including NurseTrate milk replacers in your calves' feeding program can help provide the nutritional support needed to keep calves healthy and at optimal levels of nutrition.

#### Supporting the Immune System

In addition to feeding a well-balanced diet with the proper levels of nutrients, there are now additives available that help support gut health and a calf's immune system. Today it is well understood that the gastrointestinal tract of calves may be negatively impacted during stress period, and there are additives that have been shown to reduce the severity of the negative impacts.



NurseTrate is a high quality feeding program utilizing ADM technology, shown in research to optimize calf growth and health. NurseTrate allows you to support calves through fluctuating weather by boosting health responses, supporting gut integrity, and promoting efficient structural growth and gain. NurseTrate milk replacers are available in a variety of fat and protein levels to meet the specific goals of individual farms.

What can we help you solve today?

NurseTrate milk replacers contain SI Inside, a combination of specialty additives designed to keep calves healthy and growing even during periods of stress, like those that are brought on by temperature swings and wet weather. Research<sup>1</sup> has shown calves fed milk replacer containing a component in SI Inside responded with better growth response advantage over controls, supporting better efficiency.

#### Access to Water

Make sure to provide unlimited access to fresh water daily. Even when calves are consuming milk, they still need water for hydration and rumen development. There is a direct positive relationship between the amount of water and calf starter consumed, so don't limit feed intake by reducing a calf's access to water. As temperatures increase and calves start to experience heat stress, the increase in transpiration rates to aid in heat dissipation result in an even greater need for hydration. Make sure that calves have unlimited access to clean water to facilitate maximum water intake.

#### Remember Other Important Management Factors

**Implement a high quality colostrum program** – An excellent colostrum program in which calves receive 4 quarts of high quality colostrum within 2 hours of birth is important to establish a calf's immune system, which may be further strengthened with an excellent feeding program.

**Keep equipment clean** - Equipment that is used to feed calves can be a breeding ground for bacteria if not cleaned on a regular basis. Spring is an essential time to ensure consistency with daily cleaning procedures since the elevated moisture in the air and muddy conditions can increase the incidence of bacterial transfer to calves during feeding.

**Adjust ventilation** – Proper ventilation is necessary to help prevent pneumonia and to keep calves healthy. Weather fluctuations in springtime create even greater challenges with ventilation, especially for calves housed in barns. If possible, make sure to adjust the ventilation in the barn as the weather changes, which may mean daily, or even multiple times a day, changes.

#### In Summary....

Spring is especially stressful on calves due to the large temperature swings, and often damp conditions, that can occur. These temperature swings can lead to suppressed immune systems, and higher susceptibility to a variety of diseases as the conditions are prime for bacterial growth. Feeding a high-quality milk replacer and calf starter will help ease the transition into spring and summer for your calves. The calf herd is the future of the farm and focusing on these strategies can help contribute to a more profitable dairy farm operation. Contact our ADM Dairy Solutions team for help developing individualized nutrition solutions and programs for your operation.

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<sup>1</sup> ADM research studies D07103 and D07201. | US Region | General Release | SM0419-0124 IMC

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