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FULLY CALF-N-ATED



Managing Calves in Cold Weather

The normal body temperature of a calf is 101.5 degrees F. The thermal neutral zone for a calf is 50-78 degrees F. The Thermal neutral zone simply put is the range in temperature that the calf does not expend energy to either stay warm or stay cool. Producers need to consider steps to help eliminate cold weather stress at 50 degrees F.

Successful management of calves in cold weather begins in the maternity pen. Cold weather should not change good maternity pen protocols! Once a calf is born it should be towel dried and placed in a clean environment free of drafts to dry completely. A calf jacket should be placed on the calf once dry. The calf jacket should be left on the calf for the first 2-3 weeks of life. It is important to check jackets weekly to adjust for growth. The navel should be dipped in iodine. Colostrum should be fed at the proper temperature 102-105 degrees F. Feeding colostrum too cold forces the calf to expend calories to warm it up for digestion. As soon as the calf is fed colostrum, been naval dipped, has been thoroughly dried and had a

calf jacket put on they should be placed into the environment in which they are going to be raised, (ie hutch or calf barn pen). The exception would be calves going on a group feeder, they should be placed into the pens in which they are going to be backgrounded.

Upon arrival to the pen proper bedding should be in place. During cold weather a nesting score of 3 is appropriate.

Nesting Score 3: when a calf is lying down the feet and legs are not visible - this can be achieved with straw. To review nesting score please visit: <https://youtu.be/4s5zCeZRpFU>.

Energy maintenance requirements increase during cold weather. It is important to keep the solids level the same and be consistent on feeding times. Calves thrive on consistency and cold weather only increases the need for consistency! Increasing energy delivered to calves can be achieved by: increasing meal size, increasing number of meals fed or adding additional fat to the meal.

Milk Energizer™ is a high-energy fat source for increasing the total energy level of milk replacer. The energy from Milk Energizer will help keep calves in a positive energy balance during cold weather or periods of low feed intake.

To ensure energy requirements are met it is also important to have access to a high quality starter feed. Starter should be kept clean and fresh. Calves should be offered water after each milk feeding. During cold weather water should be offered at 105-110 degrees F as water offered cooler will cost the calf energy to warm it up. Feeding water immediately following milk feeding and allowing access for at least 30 minutes will allow the calf an opportunity to drink. After 30 minutes water may be disposed of in order to avoid freezing. Water is difficult to manage in subzero temperatures however the extra effort will pay off!!

Traditionally, calves struggle to survive in bitter cold.

Today's successful management practices not only help calves survive but maintain their growth in adverse weather.

