

Adams Advanced Nutrition, Inc.

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Dehydration in Dairy Calves

Evaluating and monitoring dehydration in dairy calves is an important task for every calf caretaker. It requires careful observation, attention to individual calves, and the ability to accurately evaluate hydration status. Sick calves may lose up to 10% of their body weight in a single day when they are scouring - and dehydration, not microorganisms, typically kills those scouring calves. Therefore, early identification and treatment of dehydrated calves will help increase calf survival rates.

To evaluate hydration status, first you need to determine the fecal score of your calves. Those with very loose or runny feces are at serious risk of becoming dehydrated. [Carefully] inspect these calves for classic signs of dehydration: sunken eyes, dry mouth and nose, weight loss, fast or slow pulse, cold ears, and/or cold legs.

One way to measure dehydration is the skin tenting check. To tent the skin, firmly pinch the loose folds of skin on the neck of the calf and check to see how long the skin remains tented. If it remains tented for 2 to 6 seconds, the calf is moderately dehydrated. If the tenting remains for longer than 6 seconds the calf is severely dehydrated.

An easy way to treat dehydration is by feeding calves an electrolyte solution.* Feed moderately dehydrated calves 1-2 quarts of electrolyte solution twice daily, according to recommendations on the label. You may also want to consider an additional feeding at midday. Continue to feed dehydrated calves milk replacer but do not mix electrolytes with the milk replacer feeding in order to provide them with the extra fluids and energy that they need. Electrolytes should be fed before or after milk replacer (with at least one hour between feedings) for a period of 2 to 4 days or until the calf is no longer scouring and does not appear to be dehydrated based on skin tenting and observation. Calves need a great deal of fluid to make up for what is lost during scouring, and careful observation and treatment can prevent the high mortality rate due to dehydration from scouring.

*Excellent electrolyte solutions include ELECTROLYTES PLUS™ and SCOURS CONTROL™. Both of these products are available from Renaissance and offer necessary nutrients to aid in the treatment and prevention of dehydration and scours. Ask me for more information and manage for healthy, growing calves!

(Edited from an article by Dr. Jud Heinrichs and Sylvia Kehoe, PSU)



Best Management Practices...

It's time to prepare for the forage season and to review management factors that can make the difference when producing top quality forages. Here are some practical suggestions as we go into this season of preparation, planting, harvesting and preserving:

1. Prepare fields: remove large stones, get the surface as flat as possible.
2. Choose the right hybrid or variety to suit your location and objectives. Ask your Renaissance consultant or agronomist for assistance.
3. Make sure equipment, silo(s) or bunker(s) are in good repair; purchase supplies such as seed, silo bags, and inoculant/preservatives before hand – downtime and delays impact the quality of forage.
4. Avoid overusing fertilizers. Time applications correctly.
5. Harvest at optimum growth stage for maximum results.
6. Use only a research-tested, proven inoculant or preservative. Make sure it is packaged, handled and applied correctly.
7. Optimize the chop length setting.
8. Fill silo, bunk or bag quickly. Consolidate thoroughly and pack every load properly (achieve minimum packing density of 14 lbs of dry matter per cubic foot).
9. Cover and seal silage properly.
10. Maintain a proper feedout rate and keep the bunker or bag face smooth and tidy.
11. Work with your Renaissance nutritionist to ensure a well-balanced ration is fed. Once harvested and ensiled, the quality of the silage is essentially fixed. The remainder of the ration needs to be adjusted accordingly.

(Edited from an article by Dr. Bob Charley, Lallemand. For a comprehensive forage management guide call 800-692-4700 or e-mail LAN_NA@lallemand.com, or their website at www.Lallemand.com.)

PLAN AHEAD FOR HEAT STRESS BEFORE IT HAPPENS!

Consider these tips:

- ◆ Adequate energy & “rumen friendliness” in rations
- ◆ Airflow and/or sprinklers for better cow cooling
- ◆ Continually available fresh, clean water
- ◆ Protection from direct exposure to the sun

Feed GET MILK! Calf Starters – Results

Interested in discussing topics in this newsletter, or want to do a better job feeding and managing your cows? Call me! My goal is to help you. That's Renaissance's commitment to you!

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WHAT'S IT LIKE AROUND THE FARM?

It's hard to imagine that in a few short weeks we'll all be talking about heat and humidity! Once winter's grip is broken and the weather begins to moderate we are faced with the onset of more summer-like temperatures and climatic conditions. It's time to think ahead and plan for these kinds of days – and address the probability and impact of heat stress on the health, productivity and profitability of your cows.

Don't wait until the first "hot day" arrives. That will be too late! Cows enjoy a cooler, more moderate temperature and humidity than we have in most areas. And their ultimate comfort has a direct correlation on how well they eat and milk. Heat stress can be countered from many directions, including such things as nutrition and airflow. I'd be happy to talk with you about heat stress – and work with you all summer to keep your cows "happy" and performing year-round!

A POINT TO PONDER...

"April showers bring May flowers" and we all welcome the coming of spring! The weather is beginning to warm and we see more and more hints of green in fields and gardens, along with the colors of early spring such as snowdrops and daffodils. With the hectic pace of spring planting and numerous additional daily chores remember to take time [each day] to reflect on the serene, awakening beauty of this season. You will find that this is an excellent way to relax... be refreshed and renewed... and better prepared to tackle the opportunities and challenges of each day.



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Spring is here!

Think planting...

Think Nutrition...

Get Results...

Check it out.

