

# Caring for your calf

by Willemien von Solms

**Dairy calves are the future of the dairy herd. It is important to take very good care of them. To raise healthy calves that will one day give lots of milk, always remember the give C's:**

## Colostrum

Feed 2-4 litres of good quality colostrum to the calf within one hour after birth. Feed the calf another 2-4 litres of colostrum at her second meal 12 hours later. Colostrum is full of antibodies that the calf needs to protect it against diseases. Colostrum is also high in protein, energy and vitamins. Good quality colostrum is thick and creamy.

## Calories

On day two and three, the calf must be fed milk from cows that recently calved and whose milk cannot be sold yet (transitional milk). On day four start feeding the calves a good quality milk replacer at least twice a day. If you feed the calves milk from your cows, make sure the milk is pasteurised.



On day four you can also give the calf a small amount of good quality calf starter twice a day. Good quality calf starter is high in protein (18-20%), high in energy and low in fibre. Remember that calves must always have fresh water to drink.

## Cleanliness

Calves must be born in a clean and dry place. Clean, wash and disinfect the calf housing before putting newborn calves in it. Keep the calf pen clean and avoid wet, soft bedding. Make sure there is enough fresh air, but no draughts.

Bottles and pails used to feed calves, must be properly cleaned and sanitised. Scrubbing with a brush is usually the only way of cleaning properly. Also make sure that no manure gets into the feed, milk or bottles. Make sure that boots, hands and equipment are clean. Manure is full of bacteria and can make the calves sick.

## Comfort

Calves must be comfortable. If calves are comfortable, they can use their energy to grow big and strong. Make sure the bedding is dry. Calves must never stand in the wind or rain and must always have clean water and fresh feed. Throw leftover feed, milk and water away at the end of every day.

## Consistency

Calves must be fed every day at the same time and the milk must always be given at the same temperature. If you feed cold milk to calves that are used to warm milk, they will get sick. Always feed the same calf first. It is best if the same person works with the calves every day. That person will immediately see if one of the calves is getting sick. The calf can be treated before it is too late. **UM**