

Hygiene in the heat

As the weather looks to be staying hot for a few more weeks yet, now is the time to get on top of hygiene. Heat allows bacteria to multiply even more quickly if a food and water source is available. For example, bacteria will double every 20 mins when sat in a bucket of milk of colostrum.



“Would you drink this?” I think not! This is a common finding on farm. Ensuring milk is harvested cleanly and stored with a lid on is key.

Remember to keep your buckets or bottles clean too. If using teats, remove the teats and clean inside them - an old tooth brush seems to work well!

Colostrum hygiene is very important as the calf at this stage has no immunity itself. Feeding a naïve animal a bacterial soup greatly increases risk of death and scours.



Best practice for colostrum harvesting and storage -

- Prep the udder properly – use pre-milking teat disinfectant and remove all Orbeseal by pinching the top of the teat firmly with one hand (to stop it going up into the udder) and stripping down with the other hand.

- Milk into a specific clean dump bucket that is not used for waste milk.
- Place large sealed freezer packs into the colostrum to quickly drop the temperature,
- Then decant into single use bags, either Perfect Udder (best option) or supermarket zip lock bags.

These bags will increase the surface area and decrease the volume and so speed up warming or defrosting. These bags should be labelled with the date, cow number and quality of colostrum, then immediately put in the fridge or freezer.

We can test your colostrum for quality and cleanliness in our lab. Please ensure the sample is delivered ASAP in a cool box.

Fridge management is key both to the storage of colostrum and also vaccines. A farm fridge can often contain more money than you think! Ensure the fridge temperatures are monitored and adjusted if needed. Normal fridges alter temperatures considerably when the door is open, then turn on to a “super cool” phase that can actually freeze products.

MSD Animal Health’s Fridge Check survey revealed interesting results when carried out on fridge temperatures across 19 farms in the south west of England. On each farm, three data loggers were used - two inside the fridges and one in the room where the fridge was situated. The temperature was recorded every 30 minutes.

None of the fridges maintained an internal temperature of 2-8°C during the study period, with 16 fridges having at least one reading above 8°C.



The maximum temperature recorded was 24°C. There were 11 fridges with at least one reading at or below 0°C, with the minimum temperature recorded being -12°C.

Summer is also a good time to try to deep clean the calf shed. In an all-year-round calving herd, preventing the build-up of bugs is difficult, particularly with regards to Crypto, and trying to deep clean when calves are still present is virtually impossible as it adds so much moisture to the environment. Therefore, it is now suggested that once a year, in the summer, when calving is at its lowest all calves are moved outside; yes outside!

Shelters should be made with big bales and a dry space using tarpaulin. If you go through the points needed for a calf shed this actually covers a lot of them:

1. Fresh air      better outside
2. Draughts      ok if use bales
3. Moisture      variable but it's summer

4. Temperature ok as again summer
5. Easy to clean that's why we're doing it

This then allows at least 2 weeks rest to break the cycle of bugs. In the first week remove all organic matter and steam wash the walls. Don't forget the water troughs and feed buckets - these also need all water drained and refreshed. Then apply a specific disinfectant aimed at Cocci, such as Kenocox or Kilcox. Then, most importantly, leave for a week to dry out and try to allow as much UV light to penetrate as possible. For example, move all penning outside into the sunshine as UV is the cheapest but also best at killing Crypto.



Prevention is always better than cure.



Removing the calves asap from the dam is key (target should be within 2 hours). Also ensure foot dips and ideally different wellies are used in the calf shed.

With these few hints and tips, we hope your bug counts do not need to soar as the temperatures rises!

Regards, Kat