

Cleaning Milk Feeding Equipment

Milk and milk replacer are ideal feed sources for bacteria. If not cleaned properly, milk feeding equipment can easily become a breeding ground for bacteria.

In 2015, Gelsinger et. al. found that calves fed heat-treated colostrum with a low bacterial count absorbed the antibodies better and tended to be healthier for the rest of the study (first seven days of life). This emphasizes the importance of feeding newborns clean colostrum from clean equipment.

It is vital that milk feeding equipment such as bottles, nipples, buckets, hoses, mixing instruments, storage containers, etc. are cleaned and sanitized after every use.

Items needed: tap with hot water, gloves, brushes, chlorinated alkaline soap, acid cleaner, and acid sanitizing solution

- 1 Rinse equipment with lukewarm water (26.5 – 43 °C) to remove milk residue
 - Skipping this step or using water that is too hot will cause fat and protein residue to adhere to surfaces, causing disinfectants to be ineffective. Use a thermometer to ensure water is the right temperature every time.
- 2 Wear gloves and scrub all surfaces with a mixture of chlorinated alkaline soap and hot water (at least 74 °C). Special brushes should be used to clean items with hard to reach areas such as nipples, tube feeders, and milk lines. Don't allow the water temperature to fall at any time during the wash, as this can cause residues that were loosened to stick back on.
- 3 Rinse with cool water after washing.
- 4 Use acid cleaner once a week according to manufacturer's instructions.
- 5 Use an acid sanitizing solution in warm water (21 °C) as per manufacturer's instructions.
- 6 Allow equipment to dry completely between uses.

If your operation is experiencing higher than normal morbidity (sickness) or mortality (death), take the time to carefully examine each step of the cleaning process. There might be more going on than meets the eye!



Cleaning Hutches and Pens

Hutches and pens need to be cleaned every time a calf leaves, before a new calf moves in. Seemingly healthy calves can carry pathogenic (disease-causing) bacteria that can make other calves sick. Even surfaces that look clean need to be sanitized every time.

Dr. Dave Renaud, from the University of Guelph, recommends the following cleaning protocol for cleaning hutches between calves:

Items needed: brush, power washer or hose, Biosolve Plus, sprayer, AcidFoam XL, and Virkon

- 1 Remove all feed, bedding and organic material on the hutch and fence. This can be done by scrubbing with a coarse brush or power washing.
 - Applying cleaning products to hutches still covered in feed, bedding, manure or other materials is not effective – the product can't reach the surface it is meant to clean
- 2 Apply an alkaline detergent with a sprayer. Ensure all surfaces are thoroughly soaked. Leave the product on the hutch for at least ten minutes before the next step. This is an ideal time to begin scrubbing the next hutch.
 - Every sixth cleaning, use foaming acidic cleaner instead of alkaline detergent. This helps remove mineral scale left over from milk as well as detergent residues from repeated use of alkaline detergent.
 - Be sure to follow the directions and leave the product on for the appropriate amount of time before moving to the next step.
- 3 Move the hutch away from other calves and power wash. If you do not have a power washer, use a high-pressure water hose and nozzle.
- 4 Apply broad spectrum germicide to all surfaces until dripping.
- 5 Allow at least ten minutes for the hutch to dry before placing a new calf
 - If hutch is not needed immediately, leave upside down in the sun
- 6 Leave clean hutches empty as long as possible. This allows time for any bacteria that may have been missed to die.

Improving hygiene on farm is one way to work towards reducing antibiotic use on farm. Cleaning reduces the bacteria load in the environment, which reduces the chances of healthy calves getting sick. Always clean and disinfect hutches or pens before moving a new calf in.

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