



10 Steps to Bigger, Faster, and Stronger Calves

1. Colostrum—Collect and feed colostrum as soon as possible. The quality of the colostrum will decrease the longer you wait to milk the cow. It is important to assure all equipment is kept clean when collecting and feeding. Calf temperature plays an important part as well. Take temperature an hour after birth and make sure it is around 101.8° if not need to warm up the calf. (the calf should be up and walking with 15 min. of birth—muscle activity keeps the body warm).
2. Meet nutrient requirements for growth by feeding the calves enough and adjusting to the weather and body size. The chart below is an

Milk Replacer	May to August	Sept. to April
2 quarts twice daily	0-7 days	0-3 days
3 quarts twice daily	7-14 days	3-10 days
4 quarts twice daily	14-49 days	10-49 days
4 quarts once daily	49-56 days	49-56 days

example of a feeding program:

3. Be Clean and Be Consistent
4. Starter intake—should be offered no later than four days of age. The calf must be consuming at least 2 lbs. for 3 days before weaning. Always remove wet/ stale starter if calf has not consumed and replace with fresh starter when feeding.
5. Water—is very important for the calves starter intake. Calves need 4 lbs. of water for each lb. of starter. Give warm water in cold weather.
6. Bedding— is very important to help maintain proper body temperature for the calf. Long straw works the best for nesting and insulation from the cold.
7. Ventilation—is important and can be obtained through utilizing forced air tubes in calf barns along with calf hutches.
8. Health monitoring—items to look for are, slow to drink milk, droopy ears, diarrhea, coughing, and temperature > 102.9. If you see any of these consult your veterinarian for care.
9. Weaning—before you start make sure the calf is eating at least 2 lbs. of starter / day for 3 days before last milk meal then decrease the daily volume in half and feed one time per day (see #2). No vaccination or dehorning at this time.
10. Transition to group housing—to assure a smooth transition all weaned calves in to a empty Super hutch or small pen (2-8 animals). Insure there is a lot of bunk space (18 inches or more per animal) and a dry resting space.

- Dr. Scott Wiley

Client Successes with Wet Calf Feeding Program

“We didn’t realize that the tag had changed on our milk replacer. As a result we were under-feeding by about 30-40%. We started feeding recommended levels and then 10% extra when it gets under 10°-15°.”

“We had less scours, if they did get scours they recovered faster. I do not have a solid number on our gains, but I can see they are growing faster. We actually see them eat more starter than before.”

“Calves are much more aggressive than before, not sure if that is a benefit or a problem. Manure is a different consistency and color. It took time to realize that it wasn’t a scouring problem. Calves are out-growing their jackets by 6 weeks old. It used to take them until they were about 8 weeks old.”

- Tom Cornette

“We switched from “mob” (group) feeding to separate pens and feeding pails.”

“We saw a higher rate of gain, with healthier calves and no ringworm since we went to separate feeding pails.”

“We have a lot less stress now that there are less sick calves. It worked better than I thought. Now even the kids want to feed the calves.”

- Tricia Wilke

“I am happy with the rate of gain I am getting; the calves seem to be growing better for me. So far, I have not seen any return of the problem with coccidiosis after weaning. I am spending more money on milk replacer.”

- Dennis Kinnard

Deliver a warm meal in winter

It is not a small feat to deliver milk or milk replacer at calf body temperature during the dead of winter.

Your primary goal is to deliver milk or milk replacer at 105°, a few degrees higher than the calves’ body temperature. To help you accomplish this, try these tips from the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute in Chazy, N.Y.:

- When mixing milk replacer, make sure the water is at the proper temperature according to label directions.
- Use a fast and accurate thermometer to evaluate the temperature of the liquid when mixing and as the milk replacer is delivered to the calf.
- Mix up small batches (five or six calves at a time) so there is less time for the milk replacer to cool down before it is fed to calves.
- In extremely cold temperatures, mix the milk replacer with a portion of the total water needed, according to the temperature on the label directions. Add the rest of the water needed for that batch at a higher temperature so that by the time it gets to the calf it is at 105° F.
- Keep your mixing-to-feeding times consistent to achieve the goal of delivering the liquid at 105°F.

“A 30-gallon barrel of 120°F milk replacer exposed to low temperatures and high winds can chill to 40°F in 30 minutes,” says Sarah Morrison, research intern at the Miner Institute. “With that in mind, you want to find the amount of time it takes the milk replacer to drop to 105°F, and that would be the amount of time you have to get the milk to the calves.”