



Protocol for managing respiratory health in dairy calves

How do I keep the respiratory system healthy?



Colostrum management

Antibodies that the calf gets out of colostrum will remain active for a period of several weeks to months, this depends on the type of antibody and the quality and amount of colostrum a calf gets. Ensure a calf is fed at least 4 litres of good quality colostrum immediately after it is born.



Housing

Avoid over-crowding. Allow at least 10 cubical meters of air for a calf of 90 kg. Ensure each calf has a place at the feeding fence. Do not keep calves in the same barn as cows during the first week of life. Avoid age differences of 8 weeks or more within a group.



Ventilation and climate

Ventilation should be at a level of 6 air changes per hour and air should appear fresh, free of ammonia and free of other smells. Avoid variations in temperature and humidity as much as possible and ensure there is sufficient ventilation. If big differences between the temperature at day time and at night are expected, shave the calves properly. This reduces the amount of sweating and avoids the calves are wet at the moment the temperature starts going down.



Vaccination

Maternal antibodies will protect the calves during the first weeks or months of their lives. The age at which calves should be vaccinated differs per pathogen and between farms. Consult your vet to ensure calves are properly vaccinated against the most important respiratory pathogens.



Avoid stressful situations

Stressful situations result in lower immunity. Avoid stress situations as much as possible. Consider a step down weaning program and avoid sudden changes in the ration as much as possible. Avoid carrying out stress-full procedures simultaneously, so e.g. do not dehorn calves at the same time they are being weaned. If calves are moved to indoor housing e.g. in the autumn, carry out stressful procedures either before animals housing or delay them until the calves have been housed for at least 6 weeks.



What to do if the breathing gets difficult?



Anticipate periods of high risk

On some farms it is possible to identify periods of high risk, e.g. when calves are moved from pasture and housed in the autumn they will start coughing within a few days. Use Farm-O-San Pulmosure LD for a period of 10-21 days after arrival.



At the first cough

When you first notice a calf with a cough or a runny nose, it is likely that herd mates will also start coughing. Act at the first cough and use Farm-O-San Pulmosure LD in all calves in the herd for a period of 10-21 days. Measure the rectal temperature of all animals daily. A temperature rising above 39.5 °C is an early indicator of problems.



Once all calves are coughing

It is still useful to clear the airways as much as possible. Support the animals with Farm-O-San Pulmosure for 10-21 days. Keep in mind that if the situation runs out of control, advice of a veterinarian should be sought.