

“Ask the Vet and Ask the Nutritionist”

“Sometimes our calves break out with scours for what appears to be no reason. Our Vet has ruled out pathogens and viruses. What could be causing this?”

~A concerned calf raiser in Minnesota~

While pathogens are some of the most common causes of calf scours, there are other factors that are often overlooked. Simple changes in management can many times correct these types of scours once the source of stress is found. Two common causes of digestive stress are feeding milk at an incorrect temperature or concentration.

To Reduce the Risk of Nutritional Related Scours:

Provide consistency and good monitoring of milk quality to decrease scour occurrence.

A) Prevent variance in milk temperature: Milk or milk replacer that is delivered at a temperature below 101 degrees Fahrenheit will cause a decrease in the calves' ability to digest the milk's fats and proteins; leading to poor absorption which can in turn cause scours. Feeding temperature should be kept between 101-105 degrees Fahrenheit.

****Take the temperature of the milk fed to the first and last calf to ensure all milk fed is between 101-105 degrees Fahrenheit.****

B) Prevent variance in milk total solids concentration: Milk or milk replacer that is too rich, or too dilute, will not be absorbed properly either. Ideally, milk should have a total solids range between 12-14%. It is important when mixing milk replacer to accurately follow the mixing instructions. Never add additional water to whole milk. A digital brix refractometer can be used to monitor your milk's total solids concentration by taking the percent brix reading and adding 2 to get the percent total solids.

Example:

18.9 Brix + 2 = 20.9 Total Solids Too high

By following the recommendations above you can greatly reduce the incidence of nutritional scours on your farm.

-Lorrie Meister, CVT
Livestock Specialist