

# TOP FARMERS KNOW-HOW

## COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT



A calf gets scours when it accidentally eats more scours-causing germs than its immune system can handle. This happens if:

- Its food/environment contains too many scours-causing germs (hygiene) AND/OR
- Its immune system isn't working as well as it could be (colostrum management)

A new-born calf's immune system is immature. It needs antibodies from colostrum (the cow's first milk) to help protect it from getting sick during the first months of life.

### COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

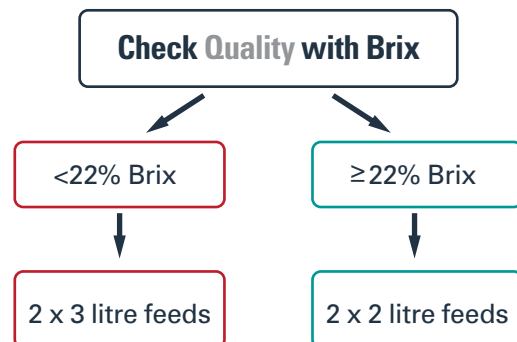
About a third of calves in New Zealand don't get enough colostrum as new-borns. To check colostrum management on your farm, ask your vet to blood test 12 healthy 2-7 day old calves.

**To improve colostrum management, focus on the "3 Q's:"**

1. **Quickly:** feed every calf enough good colostrum by 12 hours of age. A calf's gut can only absorb antibodies from colostrum into its bloodstream during the first 12 hours of life.
2. **Quantity:** feed every new-born calf 10-15% of its body weight (4-6L) of colostrum. About half of calves don't drink enough colostrum if left on their mother in the paddock for 24 hours without additional feeding.
3. **Quality:** management influences colostrum quality
  - a. feed only clean, fresh, first-milking ("gold") colostrum to new-borns
  - b. Ideally, this should measure 22% or higher on a Brix refractometer. Feed more colostrum, sooner, if it measures <22% on Brix.

(see diagram)

#### Example Strategy



- c. Adjust dry cow, springer and colostrum management to improve colostrum quality
  - i. cows vaccinated with Rotavec® Corona make colostrum with more antibodies against rotavirus, coronavirus and E. coli than unvaccinated cows
  - ii. cows that are well-fed before calving make better colostrum than poorly-fed animals
  - iii. cows milked right after calving give better colostrum than cows milked 12 hours later

#### FOR MORE:

Visit [TopFarmers.co.nz](https://www.TopFarmers.co.nz)

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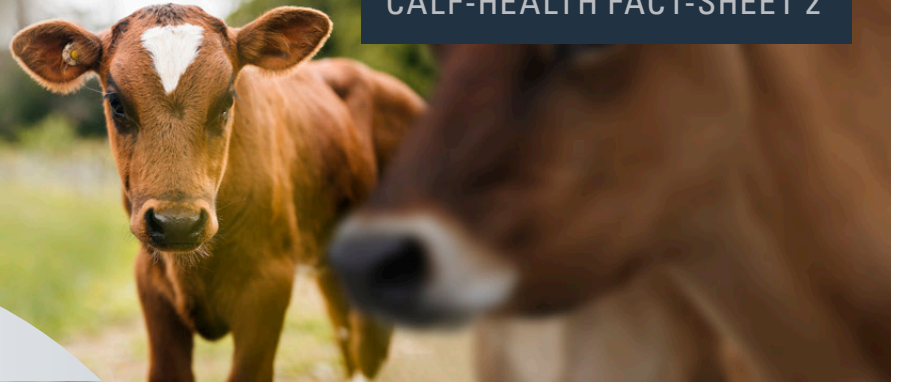
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### REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

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