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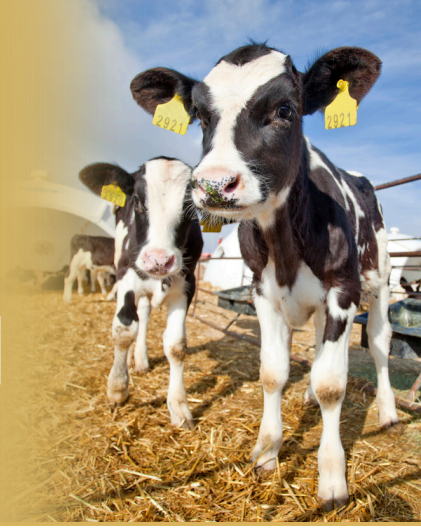
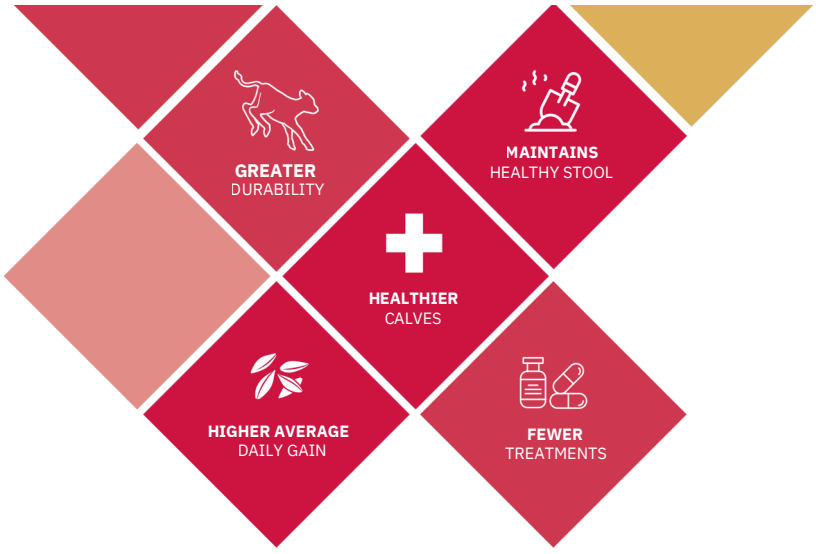


Restoring Gut Health in Calves: The Key Role of Colostrum During Times of Stress

Introduction

Summer stressors like heat, flies, transport, and dietary changes can quickly disrupt the health of preweaned calves. Diarrhea and dehydration are common consequences, often requiring immediate intervention. In these moments, producers need a fast, effective solution to restore gut health and support recovery. That's where the RESTORE protocol comes in.



Heat Stress: A Hidden Threat to Calf Health

While the impact of summer heat on lactating cows is well known, its effect on calves is often underestimated. Calves exposed to high temperatures experience:

- Reduced feed intake and growth due to increased energy demands for cooling (Bateman, 2012)
- Elevated cortisol levels, which impair immune function and reduce immunoglobulin absorption
- Failure of passive transfer (FPT), as heat-stressed cows produce lower-quality colostrum and calves absorb less of it (Hill et al., 2012)

In hot environments, especially in poorly ventilated hutches, calves are more prone to diarrhea, dehydration, and long-term productivity losses. These conditions make rapid gut recovery essential.

Ask the Expert

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EMAIL: marketing@sccl.com

Why RESTORE?

Unlike transition feeding, which is preventative, the RESTORE protocol is a short-term therapeutic strategy designed for calves that are already sick. It uses whole bovine colostrum to rebuild the gut lining, restore normal stool, and support immune function, all within a 3–5 day feeding window. Colostrum is uniquely suited for this role. It contains:

- Immunoglobulins that support local immunity in the gastrointestinal tract
- Colostral fat for energy and resilience
- Vitamins A, D, E, and K, plus essential minerals
- Growth factors and oligosaccharides that promote intestinal repair and microbial balance

These components work together to help calves recover faster and reduce the need for antimicrobial treatments.

Evidence from the Field

A study conducted at a commercial calf-raising facility in Ontario (Carter et al., 2021) evaluated colostrum supplementation as a therapy for diarrhea. Calves receiving long-term colostrum supplementation (LTC) showed:

- Faster resolution of diarrhea
- Improved average daily gain (+98 g/day)
- Reduced severity of symptoms

These results highlight the effectiveness of colostrum not just in prevention, but in active recovery during stress events.

RESTORE Feeding Protocol

To implement RESTORE:

- Mix 140 g of colostrum powder with 1 qt/L of water
- Feed for 3–5 days, or until stool normalizes
- Administer at least 2 hours before or after milk feeding
- If calves lack appetite, the solution can be tube-fed

This protocol is simple, fast, and backed by research making it ideal for producers facing urgent health challenges in their herds.

Conclusion

When calves face stress, their gut health is often the first to suffer. The RESTORE protocol offers a natural, science-based solution to help calves recover quickly and thrive. As summer conditions continue to challenge young animals, colostrum remains one of the most powerful tools producers can use to protect and restore calf health.

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