



## Mental Health & Calf Health: A Good Start Builds a Strong Future

### Introduction

October marks International Mental Health Awareness Month. Across the globe, farmers face mounting pressures: economic uncertainty, climate variability, trade disruptions, and the emotional toll of caring for land and livestock. Organizations like [The Do More Agriculture Foundation](#) are leading the way in breaking the stigma around mental health in agriculture, offering tools like AgTalk and #TalkItOutTag to foster connection and resilience.

But mental health isn't just about responding to crisis, it's also about preventing stress before it starts. And that principle applies just as powerfully to calf health.

### Colostrum: The First Step Toward a Resilient Herd

Colostrum management is one of the most critical interventions in a calf's life. The first feeding, ideally within the first 2 hours after birth, delivers essential

immunoglobulins (IgG), nutrients, and energy that protect the calf from disease and support early development (Arnold, 2014; USDA APHIS, 2021). Research shows that calves who receive adequate, high-quality colostrum are:

- Less likely to suffer from scours and respiratory illness
- More likely to thrive and reach growth milestones
- Less likely to require costly treatments or rearing interventions
- More likely to become productive members of the herd (Lactanet, 2025; Dean et al., 2025)

## Healthy Calves Means Healthier Farmers

When calves start strong, farmers experience fewer setbacks, less stress, and greater confidence in their herd's future. Good colostrum management reduces the emotional and financial strain of dealing with sick animals and that's a form of mental health support too!

Whether you're in North America or anywhere else in the world, the message is the same: Investing in early care leads to long-term resilience.

So this October, as we talk openly about mental health in agriculture, let's also talk about the power of prevention, in our communities and in our calf pens. **A healthy start with colostrum is a step toward a healthier future, for your herd and for you.**

## Key Takeaways

- Mental health and herd health are deeply connected—strong calves reduce stress, setbacks, and emotional strain for farmers.
- Prevention is powerful: Just like early mental health support, early colostrum feeding builds long-term resilience.
- Colostrum isn't just nutrition—it's a strategic investment in herd productivity and farmer peace of mind.
- Healthy calves = confident farmers. Fewer treatments, better growth, and stronger herd outcomes mean more time and energy for what matters.
- This October, let's shift the conversation from crisis to care-first thinking—in our communities and in our calf pens.

## References

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