



Bob Calves

Companion
booklet

**For healthy and
quality Bob Calves**

The Quebec cattle producers have a strategic plan for the bob calf sector. One of the targets of the strategic plan is to improve the quality of bob calves through the development of information materials.

This booklet, intended for milk producers, grain-fed and milk-fed calves producers, has been designed as a clear and quick reference that is easy to consult.



Maximizing calf health through **management** strategies at the farm is key to having a **strong, healthy** and **productive** herd.

First days of life



Navel

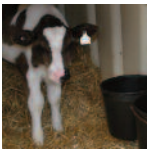
- ▶ Ensure clean calving area.
- ▶ Apply 7 % iodine solution to navel at birth and 12 hours later.



Colostrum

Every calf must quickly receive the correct quality and quantity of colostrum.

- ▶ Quality: low bacterial counts, IgG > 50 g/l
- ▶ Quantity: 4 - 6 litres
- ▶ Quickly: within 6 - 8 hours following birth



Environment

- ▶ Ensure good air movement and quality.
- ▶ Ensure clean, dry, well bedded area for each animal.

If injections are necessary, administer them in the neck, never in the hip or thigh. Preferably choose products injected subcutaneous. Drug withdrawal times must be observed.

According to *Recommended code of practice for the care and handling of farm animals* (1998), calves less than 7 days of age should not be transported.

Why it is important?

Sickness and disease impairs normal physiological functioning and reduce the calf's ability to grow.

Early signs are often subtle and require skill, experience and effort to recognise.

Early diagnosis and treatment are important to reduce severity of disease and risk of transmission.

When to observe?

At least, **twice daily observations by the same person** for consistency. The calf is most susceptible to disease in **the first few weeks of life**.

What are signs of sickness?

Physical symptoms

- ▶ Droopy ears and cold to touch
- ▶ Abnormal temperature
- ▶ Sunken eyes
- ▶ Dull coat
- ▶ Reduced appetite
- ▶ Poor growth
- ▶ Nasal discharge

Behavioural symptoms

- ▶ Lethargy, weakness
- ▶ Reluctance to stand
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Poor suckle response
- ▶ Reluctance to drink
- ▶ Standing apart from group
- ▶ Laboured, rapid, shallow breathing
- ▶ Grunting, whistling or coughing

What to observe?

HEALTHY

SICKNESS



Faeces/Dung Check quantity, consistency, colour and smell

Firm to soft, holds shape, not too dry, brown to light brown
Normal odour
Clean tail

An increase in the frequency and quantity of faeces, with a higher than normal water content

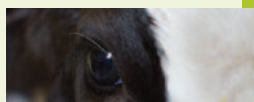
Nutritional scours: pasty, soft, clay-like dung, yellow or white
Infectious scours: increased frequency, loose to watery, bright yellow or green, strong odour, can be blood stained, mucousy



Posture Standing, lying, head position

Reactive to people and other calves
Lies with front legs tucked underneath its chest
Sit up straight

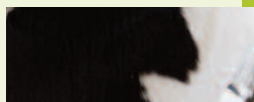
Depressed, indifferent to others, head down
Front legs stretched out may indicate pneumonia as calf tries to relieve pressure from chest pains. Thin calf with potbelly, tucked up abdomen, swollen, hot joints



Eyes

Prominent, bright, clear

Dull, sunken, discharge



Coat condition

Shiny, smooth and clean

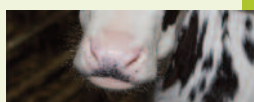
Dull, staring, damp



Ears

Pricked position

Droopy ears, cold to touch



Nose

Clean and damp

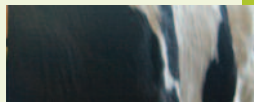
Discharge, frothy or mucous



Navel

Cord soft, thin and non-painful

Swollen, hard, hot, painful



Breathing Number, depth, rhythm

Calm, even, respiratory rate
< 1 month: 24 - 36 breaths/minute
> 1 month: 15 - 30 breaths/minute

Respiration rate: watch the rise and fall of the ribs for number, depth and rhythm.

Shallow, laboured, rapid, uneven
Coughing, grunting, whistling



Rectal temperature

Take calf temperature: insert rectal thermometer into rectum. Press it against the side of the rectum for one minute.

Newborn: 38,5 - 40,5 °C (101,3 - 104,9 °F)
< 1 year: 38,5 - 39,3 °C (101,3 - 102,8 °F)

Hypothermia: < 37,8 °C (100 °F)
High temperature: > 39,5 °C (103 °F)
Acute infection: 40,5 - 41 °C (105 - 106 °F)



Eating habits

Strong suckle
Ready for meals, finished meals

Poor suckle response
Unfinished meals, drinks slower

Heart rate

Heart rate: use stethoscope on the rib cage just behind the point of elbow or use fingers on pulse points, jaw or under tail.

< 1 month: 120 beats/minute (100 - 130)
< 1 year: 80 - 110 beats/minute

Irregular, weak pulse

Getting calves off to a good start may result in a lower mortality rate, higher market prices and lower production costs.

The quality of care provided to bob calves constitutes the foundation of a successful production.

Based on: Calf Rearing Guide - Practical and easy to use by S.J. Charlton
www.contextbookshop.com

CONTEXT

Translation and adaptation: Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec

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