



Modern calf milk replacer formulation is becoming more sophisticated and multi-functional. So much so that there should always be a quality nutrition product available which is right for your calves, rearing objectives and farm buildings situation.

For great results on any calf unit, it is important to invest wisely in a proven milk formula product for the crucial pre-weaning period. It is also worth following a few simple practical steps on-farm to make the most of your investment, says Volac research scientist Dr Jessica Cooke.

She says: "Research clearly shows the benefits, in terms of cow longevity, health and lifetime milk production, of hitting growth targets and calving down close to 24 months of age.

"We know feeding a good heifer calf up to 900g [750g minimum] of performance-formulated milk powder daily is now needed to meet optimum rearing targets. This is absolutely crucial if you want to calve heifers down with adequate body size at 24 months.

"But more importantly, after ensuring newborn calves have received enough high-quality colostrum, we also know feeding modern dairy calves to this level makes sound economic sense."

Dr Cooke says feeding higher milk replacer levels leads to fewer calves failing to reach

a second lactation. So, providing the necessary nutrition to sustain rapid growth rates (>750g per day) during the first two months of life should not only result in more efficient and economical heifer rearing, but also deliver greater lifetime milk output when these replacement animals join the milking herd.

"Research has shown there is a large amount of important early life development in the pre-weaned phase.

"The development of both mammary cells and the gut, and metabolic programming, all take place during this crucial early life period, so feeding high levels of milk replacer enables us to take full advantage.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

VOLAC recommends following a standard cleaning and disinfection procedure:

- 1 Remove all organic matter prior to cleaning and disinfection. This means thorough removal of all bedding material, followed by use of a pressure washer or steam cleaner. Try to clean in a separate airspace away from other calves

because the use of a pressure washer in an occupied building can increase the disease risk for any remaining calves.

- 2 Use a recommended disinfectant, at the correct concentration, on all surfaces calves can touch. Where surfaces are cracked or damaged or porous and difficult to clean, apply a greater concentration

of disinfectant to these areas. Then allow pens to dry out before the next batch of calves arrives.

- 3 If you are still wrestling with stubborn digestive issues in calves, consider feeding a 100% dairy protein milk formula. For example, Volac's Imunogard® has been developed specifically to improve calf gut function in challenging rearing situations.

Improving hygiene will boost calf performance, but feeding the right milk replacer formulation for your objectives and rearing situation can also help.

"It is also the time when feed conversion efficiency is at its highest, so choose your milk replacer wisely. There are even milk formulas available now, such as Volac's Imunogard® for dairy farms struggling to manage persistent digestive disturbances in their calves."

She says it is also important to choose the right milk replacer

product for beef calves, depending on growth rate targets and the animals' rearing environment.

Hygiene

Dr Cooke says bacteria and viruses are prevalent in large numbers on all farms and the diseases these and other germs cause in calves are common and costly.

Without proper cleaning and disinfection, the pathogen load will increase in calf buildings and on feeding equipment.

This means disease can easily spread from calf to calf from contamination in their environment. Ideally, all-in-all-out pens (and buildings as well) should be utilised.

"If you are struggling to manage

digestive disturbances in your calves, try improving hygiene as a priority and always make sure your milk replacer contains only correctly processed, high quality ingredients.

"Remember, labels do not really tell you clearly what is in the bag. Always feel free to ask the manufacturer to explain the label to you if you need more clarity."



RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THERE IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF IMPORTANT EARLY LIFE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRE-WEANED PHASE
Dr Jessica Cooke

Choose a calf milk for your specific needs



PRODUCT NEWS: NEW MILK FORMULA FOR STRESSED CALVES

FARMERS struggling to manage persistent digestive disturbances among calves now have access to a breakthrough new 100% dairy protein milk formula from Volac.

New Imunogard® has been formulated specifically for under-performing stressed calves or to meet the unique needs of calf units wrestling with a stubborn scour problem which cannot be overcome by an improvement in environmental hygiene.

Volac global technical manager Ian Watson says the new 23% protein calf milk formula is vegetable protein-free, which means it is more easily digested by calves under stress.

He says: "The protein in Imunogard® is 100% dairy. By formulating to 100% dairy protein we can maximise the level of Imunopro® in this product. This increases delivery of the functional whey proteins [contained within Imunopro®] to the calf, which gives it the best chance of fighting off a disease challenge."

He says the new product also contains a slightly higher fat content to allow for more energy to be metabolised for growth. Additionally, Imunogard® incorporates the established hydrolysed yeast culture Celmanax™ from Church and Dwight to help improve calf gut function and mitigate the effect of a number of harmful pathogens.

He says: "Proven hydrolysed yeast cultures not only provide readily digestible refined functional carbohydrates for the calf; they also have a recognised prebiotic function.

"Put simply, the inclusion of Celmanax feeds the calf's beneficial gut bacteria and helps bind them to damaging bugs, such as *Cryptosporidia* and *Salmonella* spp.

"This stops these harmful pathogens from binding to the gut wall and taking hold to cause disease signs such as scouring.



"For example, independent scientific trials have demonstrated calves supplemented with Celmanax™ shed three times less *Cryptosporidium* oocysts than those which were not, thus helping reduce the spread of cryptosporidiosis.

"The Celmanax™-supplemented calves also had improved faecal and dehydration scores¹."

Imunogard® also benefits from the inclusion of other beneficial health supplements, as standard in Volac's Lifeguard range of calf milk formulas. For example, butyrate for its anti-inflammatory effects and ability to stimulate gut enzyme production, and the garlic-derived ingredient Gardion, known too for its natural pathogen inhibiting effects and ability to enhance immune system function.

The new calf milk formula should be mixed at the rate of 150g to make up a litre of finished milk replacer and be fed to calves according to Volac's standard growth curve recommendations.

● Calf rearers, vets and nutritionists interested in further information about new Imunogard® should speak to their local Volac business manager, or call Volac directly on 0800 919 808.

For more information on Volac's Feed for Growth initiative, visit **feedforgrowth.com**