

Hygiene for the milk-fed calf



Hygiene matter

The calf-rearing industry could learn a lot from the cleaning and disinfection procedures adopted by the pig and poultry sectors where cleansing and disinfection is crucial.

Bacteria and viruses are present in large numbers on all farms, and the diseases they and other germs cause are common and costly. Without proper cleaning and disinfection the germ-load will increase in calf buildings, and disease can easily spread from calf to calf from contamination in their environment. Ideally, all-in-all-out pens (and ideally buildings as well) should be utilised.

Use of pens and buildings matters

- Very few units have the facilities to allow all in/all-out systems
- Germs such as bacteria and viruses will accumulate in calf pens
- Try to design calf pens so that, as a minimum, pens can be emptied and cleaned prior to new animals coming in

Pen design matters

- Materials used for calf pens should be easily cleaned and disinfected
- Materials such as metal or plastic are more easily cleaned
- Flooring – ensure that the surface has no cracks or pits that are hard to clean
- Drinkers and feeders should also be able to be emptied and cleaned between batches





Cleaning and disinfection matters

Procedure

- Remove all organic matter prior to cleaning and disinfection
 - Thorough removal of all bedding material
 - Final removal of organic matter with pressure or steam cleaner
 - Using a pressure washer in an occupied building can increase disease risk for remaining calves
 - Try to remove pen fixtures for cleaning in a separate airspace to other calves
- Use a recommended disinfectant at the correct concentration on all surfaces that calves can touch
 - Where surfaces are cracked or damaged or porous and difficult to clean, apply a greater concentration of disinfectant to these areas
- Allow pens to dry out prior to new arrivals



Remove all organic matter prior to thorough cleaning and disinfection.



The use of individual hutches allows for thorough cleaning and disinfection between calves and keeps the build-up of germs to a minimum.