



Dairy Calf & Heifer Association Gold Standards

Production and performance standards established for Holstein calves, from birth to 6 months of age, across the United States.

I. Mortality

- A. Given that some calves are born with a heartbeat and breathing, yet die not long after birth, the age of 24 hours shall be used to distinguish between "dead-on-arrival" (stillbirth) and "calf mortality."
- B. All newborn calves should be placed in an environment that will be safe from adult animals and adult animal diseases.
- C. Every newborn calf should receive care to its navel to control infection.
- D. Target mortality rates are:
 - 1. 24 hours to 60 days of age: < 5%
 - 2. 61 to 120 days of age: < 2%
 - 3. 121-180 days of age: < 1%

II. Morbidity

- A. Defining scours as a case of diarrhea which requires any intervention for more than 24 hours, target morbidity rates are:
 - 1. 24 hours to 60 days of age: < 25%
 - 2. 61 to 120 days of age: < 2%
 - 3. 121 to 180 days of age: < 1%
- B. Defining pneumonia as a case of respiratory disease which requires individual animal treatment with an antibiotic (does not include use of feed-grade medication fed with regular ration), target morbidity rates are:
 - 1. 24 hours to 60 days of age: < 10%
 - 2. 61 to 120 days of age: < 15%
 - 3. 121 to 180 days of age: < 2%

III. Growth Rate

- A. Target growth rate standards for Holstein calves are:
 - 1. 24 hours to 60 days of age: Double birth weight
 - 2. 61 to 120 days of age: 2.2 lbs. average daily gain
 - 3. 121 to 180 days of age: 2.0 lbs. average daily gain

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DCHA Gold Standards (continued)

IV. Colostrum Management

- A. First feeding
Colostrum equaling 10% of body weight should be fed in the first 4 hours of life. [For example, a 90-lb. calf should receive 4 quarts of colostrum.]
- B. Colostrum quality
 - 1. Colostrum should be free of blood, debris and mastitis
 - 2. Colostrum should be disease-free
 - 3. Test for quality with a colostrum tester or IgG test
 - 4. Target bacteria count (also known as standard plate count) is <100,000 CFU/mL
 - 5. Target immunity level of animals at 2 to 7 days of age is:
 - a. blood serum total protein of >5.2 g/dL for maternal-source-colostrum-fed calves; or
 - b. serum IgG of >10.0 g/L

V. Nutrition

- A. Structure your nutrition program to achieve health and growth standards defined in II and III, and monitor performance regularly. Consult your veterinarian and nutritionist routinely.
- B. Clean water and starter grain should be offered to calves with continuous availability by 3 days of age, and refreshed or replenished daily.

VI. Housing

- A. Target housing standards for calves 24 hours to 60 days of age:
 - Clean
 - Dry
 - Draft-free
 - Good air quality
 - Sized so calf can turn around
- B. Target housing standards for calves 61 to 120 days of age:
 - Clean
 - Dry
 - Draft-free
 - Good air quality
 - Minimum of 34 square feet per animal of resting space
 - Adequate feeding space for all animals to eat at the same time
- C. Target housing standards for calves 121 to 180 days of age:
 - Clean
 - Dry
 - Draft-free
 - Good air quality
 - Minimum of 40 square feet per animal of resting space in bedded-pack housing
 - If animals are in free stall housing, there should be one stall per animal
 - Adequate feeding space for all animals to eat at the same time