

## Is your calf housing ready for warm weather?

Use this checklist to help your calves beat the heat this summer.

Like many things in life, the key to success is being prepared. Getting your calf housing ready for summer is no different. Strategic planning today can ensure your calf raising program doesn't skip a beat as the summer heat sets in.

Aaron Eaton, calf housing specialist with Calf-Tel, offers the following check-list to make sure your calf housing is ready for summer.

- Evaluate drainage. Look at where your calf housing is located. Is there proper drainage available? Are there steps you can take to improve the drainage? Standing water can be a breeding area for mosquitoes and often attracts flies. Make sure any precipitation from rainfall and water from dumping water buckets can drain away from your calf hutches. Placing calf housing on top of packed stone or packed limestone can help with drainage.

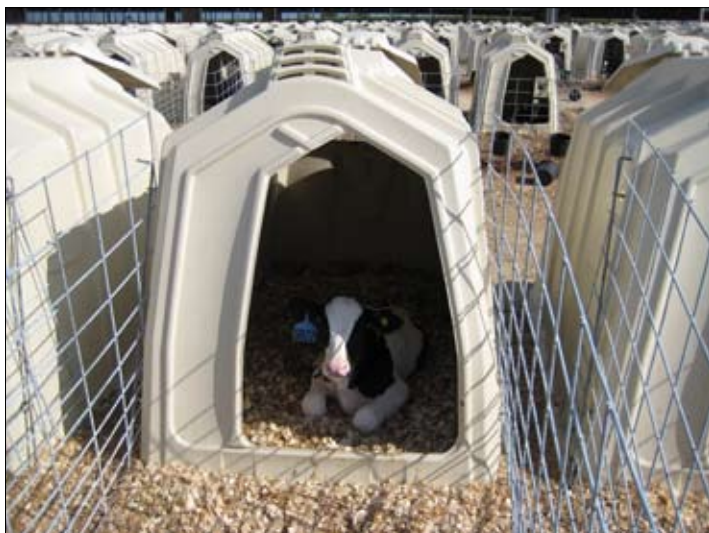
- Assess bedding. Flies love calf bedding. Changing the source of bedding to sand or shavings can help to reduce the fly population. Keeping bedding clean and dry is always important, but particularly in summer due to flies. To

keep a handle on the flies, you may need to increase the number of times calves are bedded during the summer.

- Clean and sanitize calf housing. Calves should always go into a clean and sanitized environment; this practice cannot be stressed enough. No matter the type of housing – calf pen, calf hutch or super hutch – it needs to be clean. Bacteria populations will spike in the summer months, making sanitation even more important in warm weather. Take extra steps to clean and sanitize calf hutches to reduce bacteria growth and disease.

- Disinfect the ground. The ground beneath calf hutches should be disinfected between groups of calves. Rotating hutches between two separate areas on the farm can also be beneficial to pathogen load reduction.

- Consider ventilation. Are your calf hutches located in an area that provides sufficient ventilation and air flow? Make sure calf hutches are not located against a building. Calf hutches should be located in open areas to allow for adequate air movement. Remember, polyethylene calf hutches are completely opaque and prevent the sun's rays from penetrating the hutch, which keeps the



*Photo submitted*

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calves protected during the warmer part of the days. If calves are kept indoors, ensure your calves have the most ventilation possible.

- Keep feed and water fresh. Make sure you are providing only fresh grain and water. Do not top off the water that has been sitting all day, dump it and offer the calf fresh water at each feeding. Milk and water pails should be disinfected and kept clean to prohibit the growth of mold and algae. Ask yourself, would you eat out of what you are asking your calves to eat out of?

- Maintain the area around your hutches. Regardless of whether

a fence is around your hutch or if you use a chain or tether, it is important to maintain the area outside the calf hutch. Do not let it become a mud hole. Weeds and grass should also be maintained as they can harbor fly populations.

- Wash bottle holders. If calves are bottle-fed through the side of the hutch, make sure to keep this area clean. Taking extra time to scrub or wash down this area of the hutch will help to keep a handle on the fly population.

Take the necessary steps today to make sure your calves don't skip a beat in the summer heat.