

HOARD'S DAIRYMAN

This farm saved more calves

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Even if you have high-quality colostrum, that colostrum must be fed to calves right after birth to stimulate passive transfer of immunoglobulins that ultimately creates immunity in newborn calves. If it doesn't, it could be deadly.

Citing work from colleagues at Israel's Hachaklait, Michael van Straten shared how one farm reduced preweaned calf mortality from 20 percent to 7 percent. With additional changes, it dropped even further to under 2 percent.

"After taking blood samples from 158 preweaned calves, Dr. Shmuel Bruckstein learned that this farm had significant death loss in calves, with serum protein levels below 5.6 grams per deciliter," said van Straten to those attending the First International Conference of Calf and Heifer held in Baoding, Hebei, China.

What does that mean?

“Calves either received low-quality colostrum or it wasn’t delivered early enough in life,” he continued.

“After changes in colostrum management, mortality rates dropped to 7 percent in just four months,” van Straten went on to explain.

“This is an ongoing situation, and more changes were implemented. Now mortality rates have stabilized at less than 2 percent,” said the Israeli veterinarian.

“We must measure what gets into the calf,” said van Straten of colostrum management. “There are farms that do a lot better job of getting colostrum into calves than other farms,” explained van Straten, who works for Hachaklait, a mutual society established in 1919 that provides veterinary service to over 80 percent of all dairy farms in Israel.

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