



organic farming technical summary

Colostrum: Things You Should Know

OFTS25

- Colostrum is essential for a healthy start. It contains a high concentration of antibody. These are proteins that give protection against some of the common infections the calf will contact in the first few weeks of its life.
- Colostrum is also rich in vitamin A and E. Calves are born deficient in both these vitamins and must have good quality colostrum or they will continue to be deficient and as a result be more susceptible to infections and will also be at risk of white muscle disease.
- Colostrum is a vital energy source. Calves which do not get a good feed of colostrum will be energy deficient and at risk of developing hypothermia. This becomes critical if calves are born outside in wet conditions.
- Calves need 10% of their body weight in colostrum in the first 12 hours of life. This translates as three feeds of 1.5 litres.
- The goodness of colostrum declines rapidly after 12 hours. Therefore if you want to store colostrum you should only take colostrum from the first milking after calving.
- Frozen colostrum maintains its goodness provided it is not over heated when thawed. Once the temperature exceeds 55 °C 1/3rd or more of the antibody content will be destroyed.
- Artificial colostrum products compare poorly with the real thing. They should only be used as a top up.
- Calves that have had a difficult calving may not suck. Be prepared to milk the cow and feed the calf by oesophageal probe if necessary.

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