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KNOW-HOW FOR YOUR CALF REARING

Management tips – The little things are the big things!

Optimizing the value of the calf autofeeder

The goal of any successful dairy manager is to optimize the return on investment in resources on the dairy. The purchase of an autofeeder is an investment and a significant change in how calves are managed.

Let's consider traditional dairy calf management. Colostrum and maternity are of paramount importance regardless of the system. However, housing calves individually and feeding limited quantities of milk are key components of this system. What changes with the autofeeder system?

- Calves are housed in groups! Does this impact health or is this a less stressful environment from a welfare perspective. Research and experiences of progressive dairies indicate that there are significant initial and long-term benefits of group housing.
- Nutrition – The autofeeder can deliver more milk in smaller, more frequent meals based upon the appetite of the calf. This resembles how most mammals are fed prior to weaning.
- Personnel - Many of the chores in traditional systems involve drudgery and are not related to observing calves or using data to make decisions on health management or growth of the calf.

In short, there are significant differences from how calves were managed previously. The CALFBLOG was developed to assist farms in utilizing this technology more effectively. It's also a platform for communication with experts familiar with the equipment and in calf management. Each week we will feature a section of the blog to assist those with autofeeders better understand and utilize their investment.

This week let's focus on the TIPS section of the blog. <https://calfblog.foerster-technik.com/faq/> There are two key sites – Calfblog FAQ and Management tips. Make it a goal to check this section for quick answers to questions you might have. Today, the first management tip is:

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What is a recommended routine for monitoring calves on my autofeeder system?

1. Walk the pen and note any calves with rapid breathing, scours or that are lethargic. Make a note of these calves.
2. Next check the data on the autofeeder. There are several locations where one can find this information. They include: Handheld at the feeder station, Kalbmanager (older Foerster Technik software), Calf Cloud (on your computer) and Calf App Go on your phone or tablet. Locate all calves with drinking speeds (liters/min) that are 80% of the previous three days.
3. Develop a protocol for treating calves with scours or respiratory disease.
4. Check out the [post on calfblog.com](#) on using the feeders