



# Northwest Veterinary Associates, Inc.

Kent Henderson, DVM  
Stephen Wadsworth, DVM  
Peter Averill, DVM  
Allison Maslack, DVM  
Jennifer Hull, DVM  
Blake Nguyen, DVM

## **July 2015 Newsletter - Hot Weather Calf Care Tips**

Hot weather and calves do not go together well-- think of oil and water. Calves, like cows, thrive in cooler weather and have a hard time coping with hot weather. They consider anything above 50° warm. Weather above 70° is just plain hot for them.

### **Provide a cooler environment**

If your calves are housed in a barn or shed, the answer is ventilation. Fans, open curtain walls, and natural convection are all ways to move air indoors. If your calves are housed in hutches, be sure any vents built into the hutches are open. If possible, raise the backs of hutches up to eight inches to provide ventilation at bedding level.

### **Provide LOTS of clean water**

Milk or milk replacer does not provide enough water to the rumen to promote fermentation of calf starter grains. Remember the 1 to 4 rule for water feeding: for each 1 pound of calf starter grain fed, provide at least 4 pounds (2 quarts) of water. Older calves eating calf starter grains need plenty of CLEAN water in order to efficiently ferment their feed and to carry the rumen contents on into the next stomach compartments. In hot weather, even more water is used by calves to maintain normal body temperatures. Offering ad-lib water is repaid by increased calf comfort, increased weight gains, and improved health. But, unpalatable water doesn't count as ad-lib water. Water containers should be free of milk residue and need to be emptied and refilled frequently. Research has demonstrated a 0.6 to 0.75 pound/week increase in liveweight gain when water is kept clean and fresh compared to just adding water to a dirty bucket.

### **Provide palatable calf starter grains**

Begin with a good quality calf starter grains. Choose a calf starter grain with as low a rate of fines as you can afford. Try to get one with good pellet quality – look for most of the pellets remaining still intact after a day in a calf starter grain bucket. Remember that in hot weather, the fats in calf starter grains can turn rancid very quickly. For the youngest calves start with handful of calf starter grain at a time and change it daily. One purpose of renewing it every day for the youngest calves is to avoid the rancid smell. Also, this provides a fresh aroma that attracts calves. Containers for older calves need daily attention, too. Even small amounts of moisture (water, milk, urine, manure) provide a favorable environment for mold growth. Calves seem to be quite sensitive to moldy odors. Fresh calf starter grain simply added on top of moldy calf starter grain often goes uneaten. Thus, dumping grain pails at least once a week is a best management practice.

### Taking advantage of cooler evening temperatures

Even strong, healthy calves merit extra attention in hot weather. Many young calves spend more than 80% of their time lying down regardless of the weather. This percentage of time lying down increases during hot daytime hours. When calves are resting they are not eating. In the summer, many calf managers observe the highest rates of calf starter grain intake are between 6pm and 6am. That's when the calves are up and more active.

This means that calf managers need to take extra care to see that calves have enough supplies of both fresh calf starter grains and water between 5pm and 7am. Promoting earlier and greater calf starter grain consumption pays off in decreasing post-weaning slump.

Prepared by: Allison Maslack, DVM  
Adapted from: Sam Leadley's Calf Facts



### Welcome Dr. Brock!

Liz Brock joined Northwest Veterinary Associates as a new addition to the team after graduating Cornell University this spring. A native of New Hampshire, she is excited to return to New England with her husband and son. Liz has a diverse background in agriculture, including work as a nutrient management planner and a lobbyist for farmers. Throughout her career, Liz has been working to ensure a future for farms in New England and is excited to continue that passion in Vermont. When not on the road, Liz and her family enjoy all things outside and adventurous, especially hiking, kayaking, hunting and skiing. Please help us welcome Dr. Brock to the team!