

Newborn calf care

When a calf is just born, it is fragile and needs proper care to increase its chances of survival.

Once a calf is born, ensure that the calf is breathing and if not, stimulate breathing by putting clean straw into its nostrils. Record the sex of the calf and disinfect its navel with a disinfectant. Place the calf in front of the cow to be licked and if the cow does not lick the calf or the weather conditions are extreme, give necessary accommodation to the calf and dry the calf with a clean cloth.

Naval disinfection

Naval disinfection must be done immediately. This is done by keeping the calf in the standing position and ensuring that the entire navel is immersed in a disinfectant solution. The common disinfectants include iodine at 7% and chlorhexidine at 2%.

When naval disinfection is not done properly, this results in decreased growth, increased liver abscesses, pneumonia, arthritis and to the extreme death.

Umbilical infections are prevented by proper naval disinfection practices, accurate colostrum administering and maintaining clean maternity calf pen.

Other management practices

Dystocia causes increased susceptibility of the cow to disease. Signs of dystocia include yellow colouration on the calf, swollen head, tongue, and/ or limbs, fast and superficial breathing, general weakness, limping or unable to stand up.

Feed the calf on good quality and enough colostrum a few hours

after birth. You can feed the colostrum using either a bottle or tube.