

Periparturient Problems

The overwhelming majority of health problems in dairy animals, in both cows and calves, occur around the calving event. For cows, uterine, digestive, metabolic and mastitic problems are closely tied to the physiological changes and demands of calf delivery and lactation. For calves, health problems relate to the challenge of life outside the uterus, adapting to the environment and mounting a defense against infectious agents. This issue of the Colorado Dairy News addresses some aspects of dairy management before, during and after delivery, that improve animal health.

Many of the problems that affect cows shortly after delivery can be minimized by dietary/nutritional factors. The diet of the dry and fresh cow have profound affects on her ability to cope with the transition to early lactation.

Problems that affect calves immediately after delivery have similar profound effects on subsequent health. Many dairy producers disregard the importance of dystocia and appropriate dystocia management on health of the calf and dam. While the incidence of dystocia can be managed by appropriate heifer growth and breeding choices, most dairy producers ignore the impact of dystocia on their herd (Fig 1) and an unacceptably high percentage of baby calf deaths on dairies (Fig 2) These represent big impacts on dairy profit, but can be managed by attention to calf delivery and newborn calf care.

The articles in this issue focus on cow nutrition, delivery management and calf care. These topics will be the focus of a seminar series to be held at the Weld County Fairgrounds during the last 2 weeks of April. Contact Keith Maxey for details. (phone # - 970/356-4000, ext 4465)