



Johne's Disease & Calf Feeding

The bacteria that cause Johne's Disease (MAP) can be present in the colostrum and milk of infected cows. The bacteria get into milk through direct excretion into the milk and through contamination of the milk with dung containing MAP. Therefore it is essential that calves, particularly those calves that will be retained for breeding, are fed colostrum and milk which has a low risk of carrying MAP. To achieve this, the following measures should be adopted;

1. Test all cows individually by blood or milk to identify high risk cows.
2. Avoid feeding calves colostrum or milk from any test positive or test inconclusive cow.
3. Do not pool colostrum or milk. If one of the donors to the pool is infected, her milk could contaminate the entire pool which could infect multiple calves if fed to them.
4. Harvest colostrum and milk cleanly – there should be no faecal contamination.
5. Ensure all calf feeding utensils are thoroughly and frequently washed with hot water and detergent.
6. After feeding calves adequate colostrum (i.e. at least 3 litres of milk within 2 hours of birth from the 1st milking) move them on to milk replacer. Milk replacer has a much lower risk of containing MAP than whole milk.
7. Build up a bank of frozen colostrum from low-risk cows in your own herd (i.e. cows that have tested negative over multiple cycles of individual testing) for emergency situations where colostrum is not available for calves from their own dam.
8. If calves are fed colostrum or milk from cows other than their own dam, record these details.
9. Do not import colostrum or milk from another farm as this could lead to the introduction of infection.
10. Avoid the use of waste milk for feeding calves. Johne's Disease predisposes cows to a range of other diseases; therefore a cow that has been treated for one disease could be harbouring Johne's Disease.