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REDUCE SCOURS USING SANDHILLS CALVING SYSTEM

As calving season progresses, calving pastures start to get beat up and calves start getting scours. There is, though, a simple solution.

When you have a full herd of cows in one calving pasture with baby calves ranging from one day to forty-one days old, you often get calf scours. Scours can be reduced, though, by subdividing calving pastures and properly moving cows through them.

In a typical single calving pasture, the concentration of bacteria and viruses that cause scours increase dramatically as calving season progresses. This means calves born a couple weeks into calving season and later may get exposed to a very high dose of these pathogens.

In addition, calves are most susceptible to developing scours during their second and third week of age, just about the time potential exposure to these pathogens becomes high.

The Sandhills calving system breaks up this scour cycle. To use this system, first subdivide your calving pasture or use multiple pastures. Then, start calving with all your cows in one pasture. After about ten days, move all the cows that have not yet calved to a fresh pasture. Repeat this process about every ten days, always leaving behind the pairs born the previous period. This system of movement minimizes exposure of young calves to scour pathogens.

Obviously, selecting the right pastures for calving to subdivide with water available in each subdivision is critical. After all, you may need six or more different subdivisions to get through the entire calving season. This might sound like a lot of work, but it likely will be less work than treating sick calves as well as reduce calf losses.

Subdividing pastures usually improves pasture health, but with the Sandhills calving system, it can improve calf health as well.

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