



Newborn calf care protocols are an essential step in getting your calves off to a great start. Photo courtesy of Immucell.

## 4 producers share their newborn calf care protocols

Bobbi Brockmann for *Progressive Cattleman*

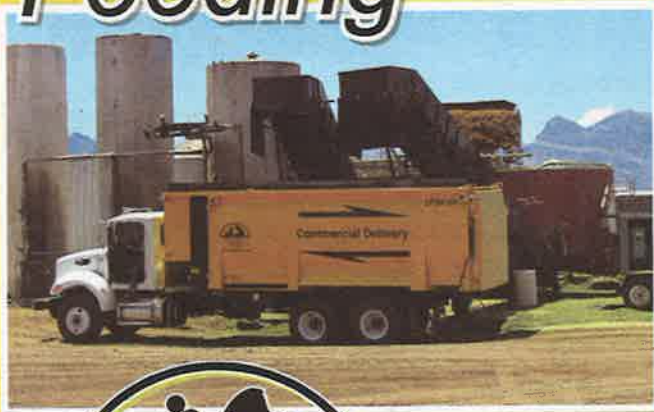
What does your newborn calf protocol look like? How has it evolved over time? What circumstances require extra attention for your calves? What tips would you give other producers?

While you take a moment to ponder what the answers are for your operation, we've asked a group of producers with various herd sizes and operation types what their answers would be.

◆ *Mike Mimms, DVM*, operates Mimms Cattle Company in Hereford, Texas. He maintains a herd of 250-plus crossbred cows. The focus of his business includes embryo transfer and marketing pregnant females.

◆ *Brian Martin*, who also hails from Hereford, Texas, runs Brian Martin Show Cattle. His herd is comprised of 350 Maine-Anjou and Charolais crossbred cows, bred A.I. or used as embryo recipients.

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◆ **Roberto Eizmendi** serves as the general manager of the cow-calf division at Cactus Feeders in Syracuse, Kansas. Working with a team of 11 employees, he oversees 7,600 Angus females in a confined setting.

◆ **Dave Hutchins** operates Millcreek Farms in West Mansfield, Ohio. Having purchased his first registered Angus in 1955, he is a strong advocate for the breed and owns an elite herd of 100 cows that produce herd bulls and replacement heifers.

### What does your newborn calf protocol look like?

**MIMMS:** First, we isolate calves with their dam for a 12-hour period to allow them to nurse on their own. Some stay in isolation for up to 24 hours before being placed with other cows. Calves are kept under shade and given an antibody product in gel form.

**MARTIN:** Since we use synchronization, 225 cows calve within a one-month period. Breeding for show calves has us calving in August, the hottest time of year here in Texas. In order to keep calves healthy, we keep them in a shaded barn with fans.

**EIZMENDI:** After calving, we dip the navel, band bulls and give them a tetanus shot, administer two modified live vaccines in the nose and mouth, provide an antibody product in bolus form and tag the calf.

**HUTCHINS:** All of our calves are born outside. When we find them, they are tagged, navels dipped, weighed and given a bolus of a USDA-approved antibody product.

### How has the calving protocol on your operation evolved over time?

**MIMMS:** We used to force-feed colostrum to all calves born with assistance but now have opted to isolate the calves with the cow until nursing occurs. This results in higher absorption levels of maternal antibodies from the colostrum. We've also switched from an antibody product in bolus form to a gel version of the same product because we feel it is more user-friendly. Another way our calving protocol has improved is through the use of autogenous vaccines in cows and calves. Since we are dealing with a variety of pathogens, we have to pinpoint which ones need to be addressed. An autogenous vaccine, a custom vaccine with herd-specific antigens, allows us to do just that.

**MARTIN:** *E. coli* is one of the biggest challenges we face; the strains can vary from year to year. Calving in the same location year after year is one factor behind our *E. coli* issues. If you aren't on top of it, you will fall behind. Adding an antibody product to our protocol is one of the ways our

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protocol has evolved.

**EIZMENDI:** Our protocol is relatively new, as it was started in 2011. We were facing challenges in our confined operation with *E. coli* and an array of other pathogens such as coronavirus, cryptosporidium and mycoplasma. Adding in the use of a USDA-approved antibody product has alleviated these issues.

**HUTCHINS:** Consistency has been steady for us over the years. In previous years, scours was an issue, but I haven't vaccinated for it in more than four

years since introducing the antibody boluses. Pneumonia is another challenge we have struggled with in the past, but it's been less of an issue recently.

**What circumstances have merited additional attention for your calves?**

**MIMMS:** Regular culling of cows with a temperament problem prevents occasional behavioral issues. Monitoring calves to ensure they are nursing properly is another area that requires special attention. Calving

in a confined space brings a host of issues with pathogens. Issues are compounded by the fact cows calve in a confined location, used year after year. Watching diligently for scours and treating calves as quickly as possible can assist them in reaching their full potential.

**MARTIN:** Sometimes cows don't take to their calves real well. In those situations, we might have to use a restraint to allow the calf to nurse. Other times, we need to graft calves onto a different cow to provide it with the milk it needs to grow. We use Jersey

dairy cows from neighboring herds as a match for calves in that situation.

**EIZMENDI:** We have experienced instances when calves aren't able to nurse from their mother. Using a colostrum replacer has been a solution in these situations. Changes in weather are another challenge. When it gets wet, we try to keep conditions dry to keep health challenges at a minimum.

**HUTCHINS:** I'm hardly ever present when a calf is born. Having good genetics in your cow herd helps maintain ideal calf size. We have used genetics as a way to get around some of the temperament and calving issues that tend to arise.

**What tips do you have for other beef producers looking to improve calving protocols?**

**MIMMS:** Identify the strains of pathogens you are dealing with and come up with an autogenous vaccine for use in your herd. From a commercial production standpoint, if you are seeing constant issues with scours, start calving in a different location. Immunity starts early; protect your next calf crop and use common-sense husbandry to keep your cows and calves healthy.

**MARTIN:** Figure out the most efficient way to do what needs to get done. Set up your operation so you can make things easier and use less manpower. When it comes to battling health issues like *E. coli* and pneumonia in calves, find a good way to conquer them.

**EIZMENDI:** Attention to detail is key. Be aggressive with your vaccination program for both cows and calves. Being proactive prevents serious issues from occurring later. It's hard to come back from an issue after it occurs.

**HUTCHINS:** It all starts with the right genetics. Another area of importance is feeding the cow right. She needs to have enough vitamins, minerals and energy in her diet to develop herself and then carry a calf through gestation. Last, it's important to make sure the cow has a clean, low antigen-level environment to calve in. We can't pamper every cow, but we can give her the right nutrition, environment and genetics to be successful.

Each of these producers has had challenges and success with newborn calf care protocols. If you're having challenges, or just want to learn how you can improve your calf care program, it may be time to work with your veterinarian to review your newborn calf strategies.

Contact Bobbi Brockmann, vice president of sales and marketing with ImmuCell Corporation, at [bbrockmann@immucell.com](mailto:bbrockmann@immucell.com) or (515) 450-2035.



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