A Plan for Investigating Dairy Calf Health Problems

Version 3.1, September 8, 2007
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A. Records analysis
Calf numbers, twinning rate, stillbirth rate and risk factors.

B. Colostrum and Feeding
Colostrum protocols – collection, volume administered, method of administration, timing, donor requirements, storage, number of feedings, testing, replacement products, supplements.

C. Housing and Bedding
Maternity pen – bedding management, other occupants, calf removal time.
Newborn holding/drying area – bedding, length of stay, occupants.
Calf housing – number of calves at maximum occupancy, number of pens, pen dimensions, number of solid sides around calf, bedding management, disinfectants, filling order, barn ventilation, pen microenvironments.
Bedding nesting and hygiene scores.

D. Protocol Review
Record routine procedures for calves, timing, and differences for bull and heifer calves.

E. Diagnostic Tests and Data Analysis
Calf procedures – IgG/total protein testing, calf health scores, fecal samples, nasal swabs, BAL testing, growth determinants.
Herd vaccination protocol.
Calf treatment protocols – diarrhea, respiratory, navel infections, others.
NRC evaluation of milk replacer for protein/energy requirements.
Inventory of medicines, vaccines and additives.
Bedding sample Salmonella culture and bacterial counts, aerosolized bacterial counts.

F. Make a Problem List
G. Problem Assessment and Plan
H. Recommendations