

- Training heifers
- Gentle handling
- Udder oedema
- Dripping milk
- Milking out
- Milk fever
- Milk let-down



Diversion buckets (Test buckets) on fresh cows - a word of caution

When using test buckets for a prolonged period at or below the height of the cluster, there is a risk of damaging teats from overmilking.

This is because the extra vacuum that usually lifts milk up into the milklane will be operating at the cluster.

To avoid this issue only use test buckets for a short period of time (5- 7 days) and avoid overmilking.

2.1 Consider training heifers in the milking area before calving

Familiarise heifers with the surroundings of the milking area, and entry and exit routes. This is also an opportunity to teat spray heifers' teats. Studies have shown that teat disinfection twice weekly, in the 2- 4 weeks before calving, will reduce the challenge from environmental bacteria.

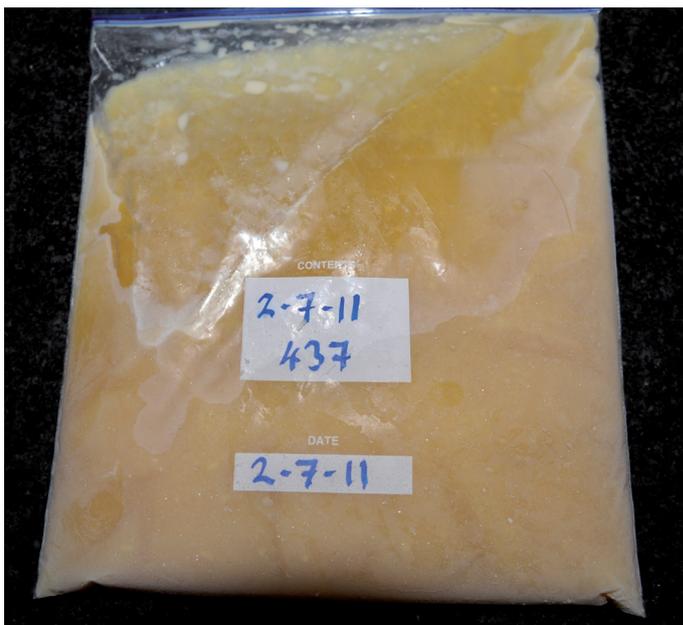
2.2 Take your time moving and milking freshly calved heifers and cows

This minimises injury to udders and teats, and contributes to cows being comfortable during milking. Encourage the cooperation of the animal by gentle husbandry. Do not rush.

2.3 Attend to heifers with severe udder oedema (flag)

If heifers are tight with udder oedema prior to calving, milk them out, freeze and use this saved colostrum for their own calves.

If they are very uncomfortable, seek veterinary advice. Prevention is better than cure, so discuss heifer nutrition with your advisor to ensure diet doesn't contribute to severe flagging.



Milk cows out fully on first milking - and freeze excess colostrum in bags for ease of thawing.

2.4 Bring cows into the dairy as soon as possible to milk out and check

Do not leave cows dripping milk - bring them into the dairy, check udders, machine milk and disinfect teats (dip or spray).

Milk freshly calved cows out completely - do not use incomplete milking as a method of control of milk fever. Discuss appropriate milk fever prevention with your nutritionist or your veterinary practitioner.

2.5 Ensure all quarters of all cows are milked out

Ensure there is milk let-down at each milking, particularly in heifers. A let-down hormone (Oxytocin) is available under veterinary direction. Stressed or agitated cows may have a disrupted oxytocin release.

Avoid both over and undermilking.



Udder oedema in newly calved heifers (photo courtesy of Roddy Webster, Merial).

Refer to AHI website www.animalhealthireland.ie for information on calf health and colostrum management.

Refer to Guideline 5

Use good milking technique and a consistent routine.



Recently built parlours may have dumplines for milk but if relying on these to divert antibiotic milk ensure it is happening correctly.



Calve heifers separately

If possible, heifers should be calved separately from the adult herd. Heifers are more likely to be bullied and forced to calve in the less suitable areas of the calving pad or calving pen.