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Make calf hutch sanitation a top priority



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El Lechero Dairy Basics - Calf and Heifer Raising

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Like human babies, newborn calves are born with little defense against diseases which can make them sick. To help protect these young calves and keep them healthy and growing, start them out in a clean, dry environment.

Calf housing, no matter what material, should be cleaned and sanitized between each calf. Depending on your farm's calf weaning program this could be every six to eight weeks. Here is a look at the steps to follow when cleaning your calf housing.

Step 1: Take apart the calf hutches or pen systems

Calf hutches and pen systems should be moved to a clean area away from soiled bedding for cleaning.

By doing this there is less chance of getting the clean pen or hutch dirty with animal waste. The goal is to clean the inside and outside of the hutch where the calf lives.

Depending upon the type of hutch you have – wooden or plastic – it may be easiest to flip the hutch on its side or end.

This will give you access to the inside of the hutch. If you have pen systems, disassemble the panels and stack for washing.

Step 2: Remove bedding

After taking apart and moving the calf hutches or pens, remove the soiled bedding. Remove as much bedding as possible by scraping and sweeping the area.

The more bedding and debris removed, the better impact cleaning and sanitizing will have on the area.



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This is very important if the hutches will be placed in the same spot after cleaning.

Step 3: Gather the tools

Once the hutch or pen is taken to the designated cleaning area, gather the tools and supplies needed to clean and sanitize. Recommended for the job of cleaning and sanitizing are:

- A pressure washer system: Removes the large particles and helps get water into tight corners and crevices. High pressure cold or warm water or steam pressure washing can be used.

- Soap or a disinfectant and hot water: Scrub or spray with hot soapy water or a disinfectant. Talk with your veterinarian about the diseases present on your farm and work with him or her to choose the right cleaning product.

If using bleach, mixing one part bleach to 10 parts water is recommended. Stay away from pure bleach.

Whatever product you use to clean with, read and follow the directions and water temperature instructions.

After the tools are gathered, it is time to clean.

Step 4: Clean and sanitize

Cleaning and sanitizing is the most important step in removing diseases from the calves' housing area.

Look for crevices and corners where bacteria love to hide.

After each piece or hutch is cleaned and sanitized, place it in a clean, dry spot.

Preferably drying should be done outside in the sun, but depending on the weather, this may not be an option.

Step 5: Rest time and disinfect repeat locations

Calf hutches and pens require "rest time" after cleaning and sanitizing.

Drying in the sun will help minimize any bacteria that cleaning might have missed.

Dry hutches in the sun. Allow plastic hutches to dry for one to two days and wooden hutches seven to 10 days.

No matter what the calf housing is made of – wood, steel, plastic – if it is to be placed on the same spot it was removed from, put some barn lime down before bedding the area for the new calves.

The lime will help dry the ground and minimize the spread of diseases. It can also help in the control scours and minor diseases. **EL**



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