

Once-A-Day feeding outperforms twice a day on Cheshire farm

Farmer and doctor of chemistry Robert Needham, who runs a dairy herd in Cheshire, says calving heifers at 24 months or younger is integral to his system therefore it is essential that calves get a good start.

He wasn't convinced with the results he was getting from twice-a-day feeding so he switched to Shine, a milk replacer that is only fed once a day.

Mr Needham is amazed by the results. "I had anticipated that Shine would mean less work but expected liveweight gains to be comparable to what the calves had been achieving previously. What has in fact happened is that their growth rates have improved, I have lost count of the number of people who have commented on how well the calves look."

Mr Needham runs a herd of 111 autumn-calving Holstein cows at Cloud House Farm, near Congleton.

Newborn calves are immediately given cow colostrum or a colostrum replacer, depending on what time of the day or night they are born. They remain with their mothers for up to 36 hours and are then grouped in pens of 12.

From day three, the calves are fed twice a day and on day eight they start on Shine Once-a-Day.

Intakes from days eight to 15 are 500g of Shine Once-A-Day replacer mixed with 2.5 litres of water. Thereafter intakes are increased to 700g in 3.5



Above: Robert Needham and Joe Murphy (Bonanza Calf Nutrition)



litres of water until weaning at seven weeks.

The calves have access to ad-lib concentrates, fresh water and straw, a key to achieving good growth rates.

Mr Needham describes the overall health of the calves as "fantastic".

"They are thriving on Shine," he says.

"What I have noticed is if a calf is a bit under the weather she will still drink. When they were getting fed twice a day they might have a little bit and give up but because they know they will only be fed once a day they do drink more.

"Shine is fantastic, absolutely brilliant. I will not be going back to the twice a day system."



Above: Robert Needham, Joe Murphy and Selina Field (Calf Specialist, Witter Farm Supplies)



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