

## MANAGEMENT OF THE CALF--THE FIRST DAY

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Management of the baby calf on the first day can help assure many healthy days to come. Here are several things to do to make the calf's first day a successful one.

Following are some management suggestions for the first day in the life of a calf:

- **Dip the navel.** Prevent navel ill by dipping or spraying the cord with a mild iodine solution.
- **Implant.** Use growth providing implants in accordance with label instructions on calves which will not be used as breeding stock.
- **Castrate.** It is less stressful when calves are castrated at an earlier age. Elastrator bands are widely used, but are unreliable, stressful and even dangerous (bands occasionally lead to tetanus, so if used, consider vaccinating for tetanus). Removal of the testicle via blade castration is the recommended method, preferably before three months. Castration on the first day is acceptable, particularly if the calf is healthy, it is being kept in a clean environment and growth-promoting implants are used. See Extension Publication PB1664, (Castrating Beef Calves) for detailed information about castration.
- **Weigh.** Birth weights within 24 hours of birth are required by many breed associations. Commercial cattle producers are less likely to need birth weights.
- **Dehorn.** The earlier the horns are removed, the less stress on the calf. Electric dehorning and dehorning paste are available for young calf horn removal. Follow product directions carefully.
- **Identify.** Ear tags and/or tattoos are often used to I.D. young calves. Freeze brand or hot brands are more typically reserved for a later cattle working when a number of animals can be branded at once.
- **Vaccination.** Probably not a typical practice for new-borns, unless your veterinarian recommends it for a particular situation, such as an unusually high incidence of blackleg. An important exception may also be an injection to prevent scours, but most veterinarians prefer to build immunity to scours by vaccinating the pregnant cow.
- **Vitamins/mineral injections.** Again, probably not for most new-borns, the most likely exception being vitamin A, particularly, if cows have been maintained for over a month on a lower quality hay or hay which is over one year old. Injectable vitamin A is available through veterinarians or at most farm supply outlets. Some people like to inject selenium, but, unless there has been a specific problem on your farm or in your area, it is unlikely that this should be recommended as a routine practice.