YEASTSOLUTIONS
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# CALF PERFORMANCE IMPROVES WITH ACTISAF & SAFMANNAN...

Sudden changes in diet composition can cause any number of problems in dairy herds, and most of these issues can be avoided with proper planning of diet transitions. But the unexpected does happen and it's important to react quickly to minimise the effect on animals.

Northern Irish brothers, Stephen and Nevin Greenaway, keep a dairy herd of 60 Holsteins in Annaghmore, Co Armagh. Their year-round calving system allows them to rear their own replacements and they are proud to have a closed herd of healthy, thriving animals, including their replacement heifers and bull calves.

The herd is milked twice per day, with average annual milk yields reaching 7,500 litres per cow, with butterfats at 3.90 per cent and protein at 3.18 per cent, and a somatic cell count of 180. They graze their herd in the summer, feeding a compound feed at milking, and provide a TMR ration while their herd is housed indoors over the winter months.

"We started feeding Actisaf five years ago and wish we'd done it twenty years ago. Since introducing Actisaf to the diet our cows have been very content, with consistent dung and very few health problems," Stephen explained.

The brothers have Actisaf included with the compound feed during the spring and summer, provided by local mill, Hutchinsons. In the winter they include Actisaf, along with Safmannan, via a 1010 Farmpack, which is mixed in the TMR.

"One of our aims is to keep our antibiotic use to a minimum and cow performance high. Actisaf helps rumen function and performance, which helps us to achieve our goals."

In addition to feeding Actisaf to their milking cows, the Greenaways also provide Actisaf and Safmannan to their calves through an automatic calf milk feeding system.

"We want our calves to get the best start possible, so we supplement calves on milk with Actisaf and Safmannan to get them going so they can thrive in their early months. They do very well on it," said Nevin.

This was highlighted to the brothers when they noticed that their calves suddenly seemed to go downhill without any explanation. The brothers had the vet out, who confirmed there was no illness, and a technician to check their automatic feeding system.

"The problem turned out to be a fault in the calf feeders that was blocking the addition of the Actisaf and Safmannan through the dosing mechanism. This meant that the calves hadn't been receiving the supplement as normal," Stephen said.

"As soon as the system was repaired, our calves visibly improved. We have always known that these products were helping our herd, but this was solid confirmation of that. We won't be without Safmannan and Actisaf for our calves or our milking herd."

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# GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR CALVES...

Young stock rearing is the second highest cost on most dairy farms after feed, so we thought it would be good to look at what you can do to drive calf growth, minimising overall rearing costs and maximising lifetime performance.

**Focus on the pre-weaning period...**

Achieving high growth rates in young calves is key – the feed conversion efficiency in pre-weaning calves means that this is the most cost-effective growth you can get. Aim for calves to double their birth weight by weaning at 8-10 weeks of age. For a 45kg calf at birth, this requires a growth rate of 0.80 kg per day to reach a weaning weight of 90 kg after 8 weeks. Ideally, weigh calves at birth and then from time to time during the pre-weaning period, so you know what growth rates you are achieving.

**Colostrum – quality, quantity, quickly**

Probably the most important part of calf management is getting quality colostrum into calves quickly and in the correct quantity. Aim to test colostrum and only feed colostrum with more than 50g/litre of IgG at a rate of 10 per cent of the calf's bodyweight within 4 hours after birth, to achieve a minimum of 10g/litre of IgG in the calf's plasma by 24hrs after birth (this gives a typical feed rate of 4-5 litres). Don't let calves suckle their mother, as there is considerable evidence that there is heightened risk of contamination with pathogens at a time when calves are most vulnerable, and you have no idea how much colostrum has been consumed.

**Milk replacer**

It is important to promote high rates of daily gain with milk replacer early in life but also not to over-feed as it can reduce or delay starter feed intakes, which are vital for rumen development. Aim to feed 6 litres of milk per calf per day, containing 125g – 150 g of milk powder/litre. As an easy rule of thumb, provide 1.5 per cent of bodyweight as solids during the first week of life, increasing to 2 per cent of bodyweight from the second week of life until the week before weaning, when one feeding is dropped.

**Starter feed intake and chopped forages**

It is vital to promote early intake of starter feed to physically and microbially develop the rumen so that the animal can start to digest fibre as soon as possible. Fresh starter feed should be fed daily and target 300g of starter feed intake by 3 weeks of age, of a feed that contains >32 per cent starch (from balanced sources of digestibility and degradability), high quality protein (with good levels of UDP) and low digestible fibre. In addition, current recommendations are to feed a source of forage as 4 per cent of total solid feed intake, chopped to 2.5cm and containing > 65 per cent NDF (e.g. chopped hay or straw) as this promotes muscular development of the rumen thereby facilitating higher intakes of starter feed. A source of chopped forage will also aid rumination which will contribute to raising rumen pH above pH 6.0.

**Weaning**

The weaning process should start when the calf is approximately 45 days old and should involve gradually reducing the volume of milk fed daily, which should promote increased intake of starter feed. A typical recommendation is to wean Holstein calves once they are consuming 2 kg of starter feed per head per day for three consecutive days. If calves are housed individually during the pre-weaning period, they should be group housed in small batches of 7 to 10 pre-weaning to ease weaning stress and encourage group feeding of starter feed.

With forage availability under pressure on many farms this winter, and the focus being on ensuring diets for lactating cows aren't compromised, it may be that once calves are weaned they are left with diets that will maintain them but might not really drive performance.

Of course, if you don't have enough fodder, then decisions have to be made about which livestock to prioritise with what you've got. But failing to get heifers grown to calve at between 22 and 24 months of age will increase overall rearing costs and impact on lifetime performance. As such, whilst it might seem costly to buy in additional feed if silage is short, expenditure on young stock feed in the short term will probably still pay for itself overall. Feeding straw plus concentrate diets maybe the only option for certain farms and this is a very viable option, however, concentrate protein levels, as well as mineral and vitamin supplementation, need to be considered if following this approach.

**Feeding Actisaf and Safmannan delivers benefits...**

Including Actisaf Sc47 protected live yeast in the ration provides significant benefits to calves during the pre-weaning stage. Through its mode of action, Actisaf reduces trace oxygen in the rumen and creates an environment where the main cellulolytic bacteria will grow and thrive, thereby improving fibre digestion when it is already challenged by low pH in the developing rumen and enhancing the development of the core ruminal microbiome, setting the animal up for a productive lifetime.

Actisaf, included with the starter feed, also eases the transition on to dry feed, as it conditions the rumen microbes for the change in diet by biologically buffering the rumen and promoting a higher rumen pH through the stimulation of lactic acid-utilising bacteria. These bacteria reduce the build up of lactic acid in the calf's rumen, which reduces the incidence of digestive upsets such as acidosis, which can greatly impact on feed digestion, as well as increasing the production of the primary glucose precursor propionate which is the key driver of live weight gain.

Feeding Safmannan, which is a premium yeast cell wall, can prove beneficial to calf performance, and is particularly pertinent with

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the increasing focus surrounding antibiotic usage and subsequent resistance in calves. Bouts of calf diarrhoea and respiratory disease such as pneumonia in the first 3 months of life have been shown to reduce growth rates and to be detrimental to first and subsequent lactation yield of heifers when they enter the milking herd. Therefore, management and nutrition of the calf early on in life has long term implications and performance in the first three months of life can have a major bearing on first lactation performance of the heifer in the milking herd.

Safmannan is manufactured from unique strains of yeast under extremely consistent manufacturing conditions. Beta glucans and mannans - the functional properties of Safmannan – support the immune status of calves, thereby strengthening its defence mechanism to challenges.

These functional properties of Safmannan also bind to pathogenic bacteria, thereby reducing the load of harmful bacteria in the lower gut, which can cause disease.

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# PUTTING COW COMFORT FIRST TO GROW MILK YIELDS...

**When it comes to milking cows, the key to exceptional results is detailed and thorough management. But with a day full of jobs to do, it is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day chores and not make time for the more finely-tuned management strategies that can make all the difference to a herd's yields.**

Keith and Alexandra Ross milk 170 Holstein Friesian cows on Ballyvoige Farm, a 222-acre farm in southwest Ireland. Their herd averages a yield of 5,500 litres with 4.15% butterfats and 3.68% protein that is supplied to Bandon Co-op, part of the Carbery Group. They aim to graze their herd from mid-February to October with a stocking rate of 3.25 cows per hectare. The Ballyvoige herd has been closed for several years, as they raise their own replacements with Fleckveih genetics being introduced, with two-thirds calving in spring and one-third in autumn.

The cows' winter milking diet includes home-grown grass silage, concentrate, straw pellets and beets through the mixer wagon, in addition to being parlour-fed.

The couple run their farm with their animals' well-being as a top priority, with German-born Alexandra carefully managing and overseeing the farm's data and analytics. "I have a background in management and really enjoy the data management side of running a dairy farm. Unfortunately, with our current facilities, a lot of our time is spent in day-to-day activities like milking and feeding and labour is very hard to find," she said. To free up more time for Alexandra to utilise that data more effectively, and for Keith to focus more on forage management, they decided to invest in the construction of a new facility, complete with two milking robots and loose housing (no free stalls/cubicles). She continued, "With the new facility and the milking robots, we will be able to concentrate on our cows' well-being and the details of their management, digging deeper into the numbers and improving our yields. Keith is also looking to improve our grass silage quality, which we do all ourselves, by introducing a multi-cut system as well."

Improving their outputs through management is not a new concept to the Rosses. A few years ago, they explored the use of yeast-based products in their herd's diet to aid digestion and rumen function. They started with a dead yeast additive but were disappointed with the lack of results. Alexandra explained, "That avenue wasn't working for us at all, but Gerald and Jane at Allen Nutrition introduced us to Actisaf live yeast, and we haven't looked back since. We quickly noticed an improvement in our yields and have had no major problems, I wouldn't dream of taking them off it."

Actisaf is fed as part of the herd's diet throughout the year, included in their dry cow, winter milking, and grazing diets, where it is fed through the parlour. "The cows have done so well on Actisaf, and we are already looking to add it into our beef finishing diets. As we move forward, we aim to feed it to all of our stock!"

# GIVE YOUR CALVES THE BEST START IN LIFE WITH ACTISAF AND SAFMANNAN!

**Feeding Actisaf live yeast to your calves contributes to:**

ActiSaf Sc 47

- Improved FCR and live weight gain
- Greater digestion of fibre
- Reduced risk of acidosis

**Feeding Safmannan premium yeast fraction helps:**

SafMannan

- Support the immune status of calves
- Bind harmful, disease-causing bacteria

**Feeding Actisaf and Safmannan to your calves will significantly improve performance and help keep them on target!**

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