

# Calf management pre-weaning

**OBJECTIVE:**

To avoid contact with adults and reduce the risk of exposure to MAP.

**BEST PRACTICE**

- Feed milk replacer to replacement heifer calves
- Prevent any contamination of calf pens/runs by adults or effluent
- Provide clean water (from a bore or uncontaminated source)
- Monitor herd for early signs of JD; avoid milk and calf from suspected cow

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- Feed milk only from healthy, test-negative or young cows
- Bobby calves from high-risk or suspect cows, do not rear
- Prevent any contact of calves with effluent
- Use dedicated calf runs with no access to adults

**HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOURS**

- Feeding milk from treated and sick cows to calves
- Contact with adults especially in a hospital paddock, or cull cows
- Exposure to effluent pond or spraying effluent in vicinity (wind drift)
- Access to open water sources and ponds

**NOTES**

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Calves and heifers are the groups most susceptible to infection; clinical JD usually develops years later. Repeated exposure to MAP and ingesting a high number of bacteria increases the severity of the disease. Protect calves from MAP bacteria in faeces, effluent, milk and on pasture while on home farm.

## Rearing shed and pasture run

Apply best practices in hygiene with regular disinfection of calf pens to ensure good health and growth. To limit MAP exposure:

- Ensure calves do not have access to any effluent
- Do not use calf areas as a hospital paddock
- Locate calves away from the race to the milking shed
- Use dedicated paddocks for calves or spell pasture
- Do not spray effluent near calf pens. Avoid excessive effluent aerosols. Beware of wind drift
- Use a clean source of drinking water (ideally bore water).

## JD risk management: it is all about proper calf rearing

The majority of measures aimed at reducing the level of infection and disease are best practice calf and heifer rearing:

- Keep healthy animals in a clean calving environment
- Ensure adequate high-quality colostrum intake
- Only use a pathogen-'free' source of milk or replacer for feeding
- Prevent faecal contamination and ingestion
- Apply dedicated replacement heifer management.

All herds should aim to adhere to the basic principles for rearing healthy replacement heifers, so that JD does not become a problem.

## Do not feed pooled milk from high-risk cows

Herds with a significant JD problem should consider feeding only commercial milk replacer to replacement heifers.

### If feeding pooled milk, reduce risks by:

- Discarding milk from sick cows because pathogens including MAP, are a threat to maintaining good health in all calves.  
*[Also, stressors can trigger increased MAP shedding and clinical JD]*
- Mark JD test-positive cows and avoid using milk from them.

MAP can survive fermentation. An extended storage period below pH 4 is required to reduce the number of MAP. The bacteria can be killed by drying or pasteurisation. On-farm pasteurisation options are available but this requires a large capacity to cater for the concentrated calving season.

