

UNPRODUCTIVE ANIMALS: THE FUTURE OF THE HERD

Visiting heifers and dry cows pens worldwide, we can easily feel that these animals are too often somehow neglected... Why? "Because they are not productive, they just need food and water" is the common idea...

Actually, **they are very important animals in the herd!** A poor management for these animals will automatically lead to severe repercussions in the next lactations.

7) Calves and Heifers

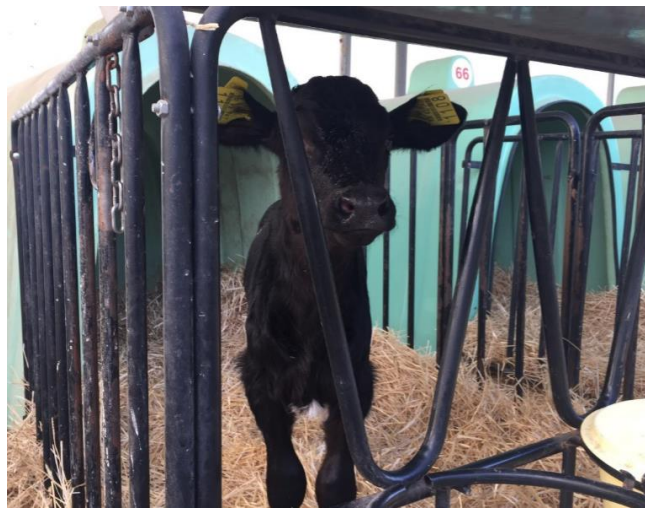


Photo: Courtesy of DVM Josephine Verhaeghe, dairy technical support, CID LINES

Some heifers are already infected by bacteria at calving. Infections come from a contamination in the calving pen or much earlier in the heifer's life: some bacteria, especially *Staph aureus*, calves from 6 months old. How is this happening?

- **Flies** can spread bacteria from infected lactating cows to heifers. Mastitis signs will appear only at calving. Fly control is a crucial step to manage heifer mastitis, using insecticides in pour-on or ear tags from April to September.

- **Cross suckling** is also a risk factor, especially if calves are fed with discarded milk (which is most of the time infected). By putting bacteria to the mouth, the heifer can infect another heifer's udder by suckling teats. It is highly recommended to stop feeding calves with infected milk. A spiked ring in the nose is helping to avoid cross-suckling.

- To keep a clean and dry environment will also help the calf to build up a strong immunity, It is essential for a future productive life. Poor hygiene and challenging environment are the source of many diseases in calves which lead to a decreased food conversion rate and a slower growth.

- Adequate nutrition with vitamins and minerals supplementation is a must to boost heifers' immunity and growth.

Investing in hygiene and nutrition protocols for the calves has a strong impact on the first and further lactation yields.

What to do if too many heifers mastitis have been detected on your farm?

It is recommended to disinfect the teats as a prevention measure BEFORE calving. Ideally the heifers are brought in the milking parlor, once a day, one week before calving to get the teats disinfected by spraying or by dipping. . This protocol helps the heifers to get used to the milking parlor, thus reducing the stress of milking after calving.



Photo: Courtesy of DVM Robin Franzon, dairy technical support, CID LINES

- **Sprayer / SD post-dipping products : Kenocidin and Kenolac (fly repellent)**
- **Spray 1 week before calving all teats (1 time a day)**
- **Dip heifer teats in the milking parlor with dipping products (1 time a day) = Recommended**
 - **kenofix put on heifers teats (to avoid cross suckling and detect problematic animals by coloration)**