



## ***Practice Tips from Producers: Raising Healthy, Johne's-free Heifers***

During the Johne's project veterinary practitioners and producers demonstrated good ways of producing Johne's-free heifers. Not all these tips are applicable at all farms, but when needed these are handy to have in your "tips tool-box".

### **1. Identify Johne's test positive cows and their relatives.**

"On-cow" identification of Johne's test positive cows or suspects reminds everyone at calving time to make an extra effort with their heifer calves to prevent JD exposure.

#### **Example: Use colour coded cable ties on id tags to code animals.**

For example, put a red cable tie on the tags of cows that test positive. Once a cow tests positive, her female offspring (right down to baby calves) should be tagged with a second colour of cable tie.

Calf with a cable tie on NLID tag stem.  
YELLOW indicates the dam was a test positive cow.



Cow with cable ties on NLID ear tag stem  
YELLOW indicates the mother was a test positive cow.  
RED was added when this cow became a "test positive" herself.





## 2. Create a "cow-free" zone for newborn calves.

Removing the calf from the cow environment, even without complete removal from the maternity pen, keeps the calf from ingesting cow manure, nursing contaminated teats or becoming contaminated on hair or skin. The ideas below can be used in an existing calving pen or box stall. Put the calf in here immediately after birth. Use clean bedding so calves can "nest".

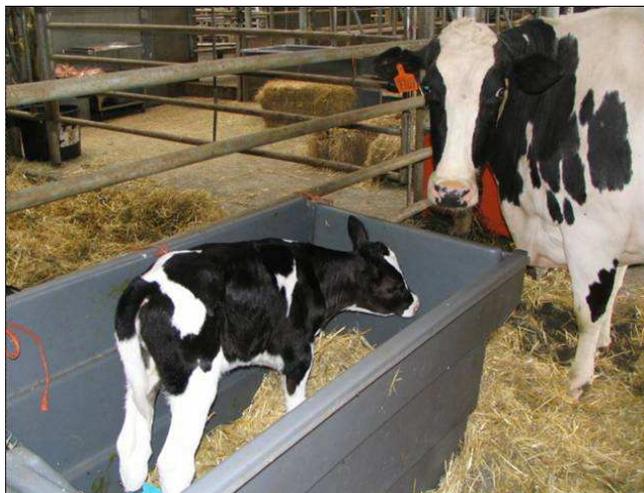
**Examples: Use a gate or pen or container to make an area only for calves, keeping cows out at all times.**



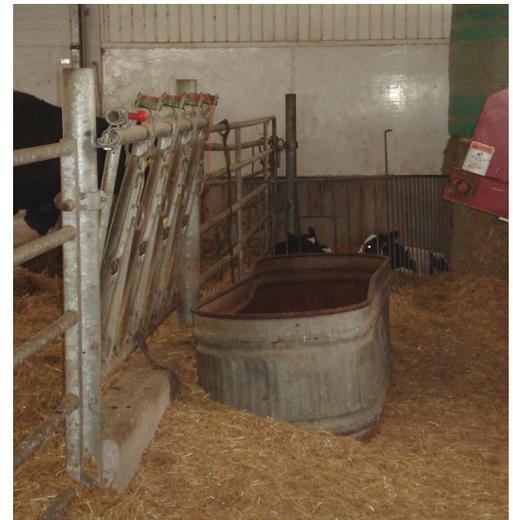
Calf in a separate "calf-only" area made with a gate hinged at one end that swings to make a small area in the corner of the maternity pen.



Calf in calving area confined in a four-sided, moveable pen. Lots of clean bedding protects the calf from cow manure.



Feed or silage cart used to make a portable calf pen for the calf for a few hours after calving



Old water trough used to make a calf pen for the calf for a few hours after calving. Self locks make for easy milking of colostrum, as the cow licks the calf.



### 3. Feed "low risk" colostrum and milk to heifer calves.

Only colostrum from the very first milking, done within a few hours of calving, should be fed as a first feeding to calves. Producers can select who the milk and colostrum comes from based on Johne's status to reduce the chance of calves ingesting Johne's bacteria in colostrum or milk.

Low risk colostrum and milk comes from cows that:

- have teats that are clean and dry before colostrum or milk harvesting
- are younger (starting 1<sup>st</sup> lactation)
- are test negative themselves (if testing is being done)
- are not related to any JD test positive or JD clinical cows
- have been home raised (not added to the herd after being raised elsewhere), and,
- are healthy at calving.

#### Examples: "Donor cows" can be selected to supply colostrum and milk for heifer calves.

- In pipeline systems, milk younger, test negative cows first for calf milk.
- In parlour systems collect calf milk from heifer groups, or from turns of the parlour that have only younger cows, before the milk reaches the bulk tank.
- In parlour or pipeline systems collect milk from selected individual cows using a bucket in the parlour.

### 4. Feeding colostrum – It's easier if you do it early.

Several producers have reported that calves will drink the recommended 4 litres of colostrum (3L for Jerseys) easier and quicker if the 4 litres of colostrum is offered before they attempt to get up after birth.

**Example: Offer 4 litres of colostrum to Holstein calves (this might mean 2 calf feeding bottles) or 3 litres to Jerseys, before calves try to stand.**

