PRESERVING COLOSTRUM

Background: Preserving and storing colostrum ensures availability of good quality colostrum in times of short supply.

Colostrum should be cooled and preserved as soon as possible after harvesting – bacteria will multiply and antibody concentration will decline if left at room temperature. Hygiene is critical; bacteria interfere with colostrum antibody absorption, risking failure of passive transfer. Bacteria can also cause disease directly.

Colostrum may be pasteurised before preserving. Pasteurisation of colostrum (60°C for 30-60 mins) can reduce (but not eliminate) bacterial contamination, however it will reduce the antibody concentration slightly. Therefore, it is important to ensure your colostrum quality is good.

METHOD	НОЖ	WHY
REFRIGERATION	 At 4°C - monitor fridge temperature using a fridge thermometer. Store in 2L flat containers Clean up any spills promptly Store for 24-48 hrs 	 Bacterial growth is slowed at low temperatures Storage in small volumes in flat containers facilitates rapid cooling and defrosting Microwaving or overheating damages antibodies
FREEZING	 At -20°C Store in 2L flat containers Store up to one year Defrost in warm water bath, no hotter than 50°C Do not microwave 	
CHEMICAL (E.G. POTASSIUM SORBATE) ²	 Potassium Sorbate can be added to colostrum at 0.5% wt/vol Mix accurately Use in conjunction with refrigeration Store for 2-5 days 	 Useful for extending the life of refrigerated colostrum Potassium sorbate overdose may cause toxicity in calves

Reference:

1. Hyde, R.M., et al, 2020. Quantitative Analysis of Colostrum Bacteriology on British Dairy Farms. Frontiers in Veterinary Science, 7 (December), 1–12.

2. Stewart, S. et al., 2005. Preventing bacterial contamination and proliferation during the harvest, storage, and feeding of fresh bovine colostrum. Journal of Dairy Science, 88 (7), 2571–2578.

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