FrontLine®
MARKETING INFORMATION FOR TODAY'S FEED PROFESSIONAL

Starting new Customers Successfully

Choosing the right milk replacer in your product line will help make changeovers smoother

Six weeks of farm-calling, product mixing comparisons, and a special purchase offer have all been combined with your positioning of your company's best calf milk replacer (CMR). Today is the day you finally receive an order from that prized new customer!

Have you ever experienced this thrill of gaining a new milk replacer customer? A thrill that is quickly tarnished by a phone call a week later from an irate calf manager. He/she is stating that your product is not performing, the calves are sick, and he/she is switching back to his/her old supplier.

Many salespeople have received this frustrating phone call, and that's why it is so important to position a milk replacer that fits your prospect's management style and calf environment. Forcing a calf raiser to adjust to your milk replacer may cause misuse of your product and cause the raiser to be dissatisfied.

When selling milk replacer to a prospect, study the product that they are currently using. If the producer is pleased with his/her current CMR, figure out why. Also figure out how your CMR compares nutritionally. If there are major differences, determine if your product's differences will continue to mesh with the calf-raiser's feeding style and calf environment.

Some specific considerations should include:

Is the calf-raiser currently using the best medication level or type? If he/she is, deliver your CMR with the same medication type and level. Think for a moment about a calf-raiser in your area that is using a milk replacer medicated with a Neomycin/Oxytetracycline combination. He/she may have chosen this medication because their #1 health challenges are bacterial scours and respiratory ailments. Therefore, a switch to a lasalocid or decoquinate based CMR could allow a sudden rash of scours and respiratory problems. Subsequently, the product appears to have caused problems, and your customer becomes upset. As a general rule, match the medications for at least 2-4 weeks so that an equal product comparison can be made.

If you determine that the medication type or level currently being used is incorrect, explain to the producer why you would recommend changing medications. Work in conjunction with the calf-raiser and veterinarian to correctly identify the major challenges on the farm.

Consider the protein and fat content of the milk replacer. The amount of protein and fat delivered to the calf can greatly affect performance. If the producer is currently feeding an all-milk 20-20 CMR, match or exceed these levels on your own all-milk CMR recommendation. Use this same logic when comparing plant protein based CMRs.

Study the protein sources on both tags. When you are switching very young calves always try to move up to a more digestible protein source. Milk proteins provide the highest calf performance. Listed in order of highest to lowest digestibility: milk proteins, red blood cells, soy and wheat isolates, soy protein concentrate, and soy flour.

Review and demonstrate the mixing and feeding procedures of your CMR. Milk replacers have different mixing characteristics. Some CMRs may mix satisfactorily with cooler water, while others may benefit from using warm (110-115°F) water. Read your product's tag closely to determine the correct water temperature for mixing. When the water is added, (before or after the CMR) can also affect its mixing characteristics. The optimal procedure is to measure the desired quantity of warm water, and add the milk replacer powder to it.

Allow the calves to make a smooth transition to your CMR. When switching from one milk replacer to another, blend the liquid diet for 3-4 days if possible. This will allow for the calves' digestive system to adapt to the new formula. Watch the stool consistency to assure the transition is going smoothly.

The above considerations can greatly improve your sales success and your new customer's satisfaction because they involve studying the calf-raiser's operation and knowing your product's capabilities.

Milk Products
The Milk Replacer Source™

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