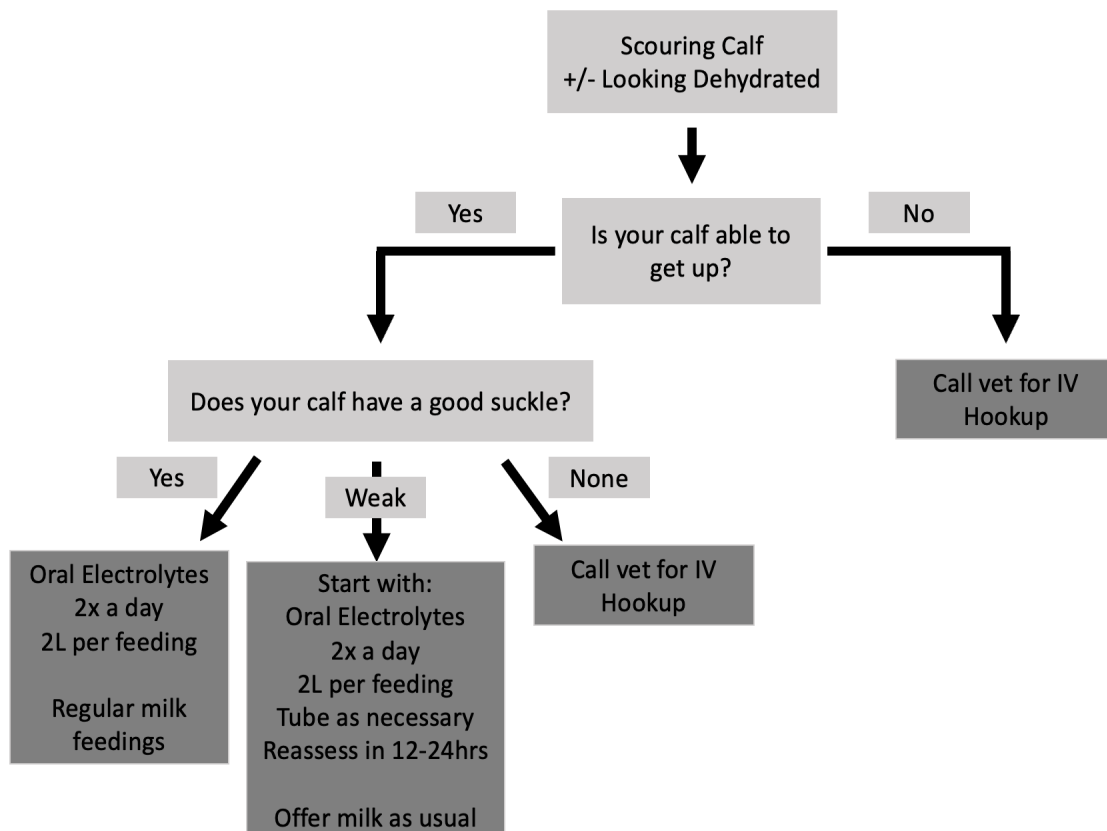


Supporting Our Scouring Calves: Some Practical Tips

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Scours is the number one cause of death in calves under one month of age. It causes dehydration, a change in the metabolic state of the calf, and electrolyte shifts in the body. No producer who raises calves is immune to scours, and it can be extremely frustrating to deal with. One hour you're winning, and the next the calf is flat out.

Below you'll find a simplified flowchart on when to intervene in a scours case on farm to hopefully get calves feeling better sooner. There are other things that can be looked at, like dehydration level, but this flowchart can act as a basic tool. A calf that is extremely dehydrated, down or with no suckle has potential to get turned around with intravenous (IV; in the vein) fluids, if called soon enough.



Other things to keep in mind:

Anti-Inflammatory

All scouring calves should receive at least **ONE** dose of anti-inflammatory, as this can improve pain and has been shown to shorten days of scours. Some options include:

****Do NOT exceed more than 3 doses of anti-inflammatory in a row, as this could lead to the development of abomasal ulcers.**

Milk Feeding

Do not withhold milk during scours. Calves need nutrients to repair their damaged gut. First thing in the morning, offer as much milk as they will drink up to their normal amount. Follow up with electrolytes, see below. Work in one more electrolyte feeding as well as regular milk throughout the day, depending on your program (time of day, how many feedings per day, etc.).

Timing of Electrolytes

Electrolyte and milk should be fed minimum 2-3hrs apart, to not impact milk digestion.

Tube Feeding Recommendations

- Tube colostrum as necessary in first 12hrs of life
- Do not tube milk. This can cause rumen upset and clostridial issues, among other things. It's best to let a sick calf drink what they want and subsequently add electrolytes to keep hydrated.
- Tube electrolytes as necessary

Antibiotic Use

Not all scour cases require antibiotics. Some examples of cases when antibiotics are warranted if the calf spikes a fever above 39.5°C, if there is a purple line on the gums or other evidence of septicemia, or if we are suspicious of an E. Coli scours within the first few days of life.

Dehydration Assessment

Scouring calves can be <5% dehydrated and still look normal. Early intervention with electrolytes is key to helping calves replenish their fluid levels. Calves that are mild to moderately dehydrated can usually stand and suckle but may be weaker than they were previously. Calves that are severely dehydrated are in definite need of IV fluids. How sunken the eyeball is (called eyeball recession) is a good tool to assess the hydration level of a calf to monitor if they are improving or not. Eyeball recession is measured between the lower eyelid and the eyeball. The bigger the space, the more dehydrated the calf is. See below for measurements.

Dehydration Level	Demeanor	Eyeball Recession		Skin Tent Duration
None (<5%)	Normal	None		<1 s
Mild (6-8%)	Slightly Depressed	2-4 mm	(1/8")	2-4 s
Moderate (8-10%)	Depressed	4-6 mm	(3/16")	4-6 s
Severe (10-12%)	Comatose	6-8 mm	(1/4")	>6 s

Table taken from the Beef Cattle Research Council website.