



News Release

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BETTER NUTRITION CAN REPLACE MEDICATED MILK REPLACERS

Shoreview, Minn. – The Food and Drug Administration has ruled that milk replacers may no longer be manufactured with the combination drug of neomycin and oxytetracycline, better known as neo-terramycin (NT), in its current 2:1 dosage. For many dairy producers, this will necessitate a change in the milk replacer they purchase for their calves. Approximately 55 to 65 percent of all milk replacers sold in the U.S. is manufactured with neo-terramycin. There are two scenarios in which neo-terramycin can still be added to milk replacers:

- For continuous feeding, the total amount of the drug combination fed cannot exceed 0.05 to 0.1 milligrams per pound of body weight.
- For disease treatment, 10 milligrams per pound of bodyweight can be fed daily, but only for 7 to 14 days in calves up to 250 pounds.

The FDA also allowed that existing supplies of milk replacers manufactured with the 2:1 dosage of NT can be sold until August 2010.

“Most dairy producers who feed these medicated milk replacers are doing so as a preventative measure against scours,” explained Dr. Tom Earleywine, director of nutritional services for Land O’Lakes Animal Milk Products. “In our research comparing medicated and non-medicated milk replacers, we have not seen a consistent, significant advantage to adding medication, especially when calves are fed a higher plane of nutrition.”

Land O’Lakes Animal Milk Products has conducted 11 studies comparing non-medicated milk replacers to those with neo-terramycin added at the traditional 2:1 ratio. In seven of those studies, calves responded with an improvement in gain when the medication was added. However, in the six trials where calves were fed a higher plane of nutrition, just two of the groups showed a growth response. There was no significant reduction in scours consistently seen in calves fed a medicated milk replacer.

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“These findings are consistent with other research which has demonstrated an advantage in health for calves supplied a higher plane of nutrition,” Dr. Earleywine confirmed. “Nutrition trumps medication every day, and the best preventative step we can take to protect our calves’ health is to supply them with a level of nutrition that will allow them to fight off disease challenges and achieve their full potential.”

In a recent study by the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, a full potential plane of nutrition reduced the effect of disease due to *Cryptosporidium parvum* in neonatal dairy calves. Calves fed the high plane of nutrition maintained hydration, had faster resolution of diarrhea, grew more, and demonstrated greater feed efficiency than calves fed a conventional diet.

Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products advises producers who are evaluating their milk replacer options to look first at plane of nutrition, not medication. A full potential feeding program, including a 28 percent protein, 20 percent fat milk replacer with soluble fiber technology along with a high protein, highly palatable calf starter will provide calves the nutrition they need to ward off disease challenges and grow to their potential.

“Producers should look to nutrition and nutritional technologies that have a proven track record of having a positive impact on the health of a calf,” Dr. Earleywine stressed. “Feeding calves to their potential will not only improve their ability to ward off disease, but these calves also have the potential to reach breeding and freshening targets earlier, produce more milk in their first lactation, and achieve a lifetime of better performance.

“Remember, there is no second chance to feed calves right,” he concluded.

Since 1951, when Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products Company developed the first calf milk replacer, the company has been committed to creating the best milk replacers from the best technologies and quality ingredients. Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products Company is a division of Land O'Lakes, Inc. a national farmer-owned food and agricultural organization.

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