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# *Whole Milk Feeding Made Easy*

Choosing a liquid feed source for calves is an individual decision for every dairy. The advent of on-farm pasteurization, pasteurized milk balancers and on-line calculators, has broadened the options for successfully feeding whole milk in recent years.

Utilizing balancers to normalize solids content or boost nutrient levels to meet nutrition and average daily gain goals need not be a complicated process. Learning the correct procedure, then establishing regular on-farm protocols, will make feeding balancers another, regular routine on the dairy.

Figure 1 (page 2) shows the decision process for feeding whole milk versus milk replacer. On the whole-milk side, there are a few more decisions to be made. For example, if a herd has no history of Johne's disease, *Mycoplasma* or other vertically transferrable diseases, a choice may be made to forego pasteurization. However, pasteurization is widely accepted as a good practice whether feeding saleable or hospital milk.

If a balancer is going to be used to boost solids, two important things to remember are: (1) evaluate solids level *before* pasteurization; and (2) add the balancer *after* pasteurization.

A Brix refractometer is an easy-to-use, on-farm tool that estimates solids levels in milk, and provides results within minutes. If a sample contains less than 12% solids, it is advisable to use a balancer to normalize solids levels, following product labels for balancer powder quantity. Conversely, if a sample is very high in solids, water can be added to increase the volume of the whole milk so more calves are fed within the established nutrition and gain goals.

Establishing regular procedures for managing waste milk will ensure that calves receive a high-quality, consistent diet that meets the farm's calf raising goals with every liquid meal.

(*Figure 1 shown on page 2)*

Milk Products
The Milk Replacer Source®

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**Figure 1. Calf-feeding decision tree**