

**Fenceline**

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Little Ellie Rae was quite shocked to see a baby calf in "Andma's" laundry room. It was a last ditch effort to keep #3103 alive. It was a very cold day when he was born, his mama was very protective. He got his new ear tag, banded and given his colostrum bolus and newborn vaccination. The administrators of such were quite eager to leave well enough alone, the next day they realized #3103 had not moved from the original spot. Closer examination, from the safety of the hog box on the skid loader, proved he was an icicle. Moving him to a closed in stall in the barn, with lots of straw as insulation, was not going to do the trick. #3103 was moved to the laundry room, we have a heated room in another shed, but it has quickly turned into storage of furniture for everyone in the family. As he started to warm up, he took some of the colostrum we milked from mama. He was perking up, still not able to stand. It was at this point, Ellie Rae was observing when #3103 decided to bellow. Poor little girl, couldn't get behind "Andma's" leg fast enough. At one point, we had contemplated "tube feeding" him. Our success rate is about 50/50. His lungs were already full, I think he had aspirated during birth. Luckily, the next morning he was spry enough to go outside with mama. He's up and nursing now, still a bit wobbly on the back legs, hopefully he will adjust.

The esophageal feeder is a tool designed to deliver colostrum when a calf is unwilling or unable to nurse. Being unable to nurse can be caused by quite a few factors. The process of calving may result in oxygen deprivation to the brain for a time, bruising and occasionally broken bones. An extended time in the birth canal, can cause a swollen head and a swollen tongue that cannot suckle. Exceptionally cold weather may contribute to delayed nursing, Large teats may be difficult for a calf to nurse.

So let's do a tube feeding 101! Prior to tubing the calf, make sure the feeder is clean and undamaged. I noticed ours has some rough spots on it that could cause some damage of its own, better get that replaced. The length of the tube and the size of the calf will dictate how far the tube should be inserted. Measure from the mouth to the point of the shoulder, this is the approximate distance, it should go. Have the calf standing if possible. If it can't stand have it sit up on it's sternum. Make sure the milk won't be coming out until the tube is in place, kink the tube or clamp it off during passage. Moisten the end of the feeder with colostrum to make it slippery. Open the calf's mouth, keep his nose below the ears. Insert the tube, wait for the calf to swallow, gently slide the tube down the esophagus. Make sure the tube is on the left side of the calf's neck, the tube will be smooth, The trachea or windpipe will have ridges. Now this is where someone told me to listen in the tube, this is difficult unless you have disconnected the tube from the bag. When you are sure it's in the right place, lift the bag and let the colostrum flow in by gravity.

When removing the tube, kink the hose before pulling it out, you don't want milk into the lungs. Pull it out quickly and wash with hot soapy water, followed by bleach and hot water. Using a tube feeder, may mean life or death. Videos are available on You Tube that shows the entire process.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndj807\\_j6j8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndj807_j6j8). Your veterinarian is the best resource to teach you the proper technique.