

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF DEHYDRATION IN CALVES

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

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SKIN TENT

- ✓ Perform a skin-tent test by pinching the skin over the neck and gently pulling to make a tent. Release and count how many seconds it takes for the skin to return to normal.

BEHAVIOUR

- ✓ Look for behaviour cues in the herd, such as a calf that is not stretching when rising. Watch for calves with drooping ears. A cow bawling for a calf or showing a full udder indicates the calf is not nursing. Watch for calves that appear lethargic or depressed.

EYES

- ✓ To assess a calf for sunken eyes, look at the space between the lower eyelid and the eyeball. The wider the space, the more dehydrated the calf is.

BALANCE

- ✓ Notice any calves that are staggering or have poor balance.

TEMPERATURE

- ✓ Be aware of the link between dehydration and hypothermia. Normal temperature is 38-39°C.

SUCKLE

- ✓ Pay attention to calves with a weak or non-rhythmic suckle reflex.

