

# CALF 911

## DEHYDRATION CHECKLIST

### GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF DEHYDRATION IN CALVES

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

Source: Geof Smith, DVM, MS, PhD, Dept. of Population Health & Pathobiology, North Carolina State University



### 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.

