Package and practices for management of Buffalo calves to reduce mortality:

Calves are the foundation on which the future of any dairy enterprise is built. If good replacement heifers are to be found, the management of calves must be effective. With good feeding regime and routine practices, death cases are reduced.

First week of birth: After the calf is able to stand, allow it to suckle colostrum at will from the mother. Colostrum absorption is highest within 12 hours after birth and very low after 24 hours. Calf must suckle colostrum immediately after birth, most recommended within an hour or two. Generally, colostrum has antibodies that pass immunity to the calf hence protect it against diseases the mother might have been exposed to. It is also a rich source of nutrients as it has high amount of energy and protein compared to milk.

Second week: Colostrum feeding continues for about four to five days. Though up to this time, the rumen of the calf is not yet well-developed but has a groove formed that help deliver milk straight from the oesophagus to the abomasum (true stomach), restricting solid feed to pass.

Third week: Between two to three weeks of age, introduce high quality roughage. This can be supplemented with concentrates preferably calf starter pellets. Where hay is used, it should be of high quality, fine texture and mixed with legumes.

Week six: The amount of milk here is reduced and the calf is encouraged to consume dry feeds, including concentrates until weaning time at week nine.

Weaning:

To reduce stress on calves, weaning should be done gradually. Reduce the twice a day milk feeding to once a day to allow the calf’s digestive system to adjust to the new diet.

Deworming Schedule:

The farmers in field usually do not follow any recommended schedule for deworming in calves. Most of them use to deworming only when the calf is off-feed or when worms are observed in the faeces. The farmers are required to understand the importance of deworming and follow a recommended schedule for same. Albendazole suspension 5-10 mg/kg bw per
oral may also be given. Second dose is to be given after 21 days. For the first year repeat
doses every four months. Thereafter, dosage is to be given twice in a year.

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