

Colostrum Storage and Handling

- 1. Feed, refrigerate or freeze colostrum within one hour of collection.** High-bacteria colostrum needs to be used sooner and very clean colostrum can be kept longer. Colostrum can be stored in the fridge or the freezer.
- 2. If storing in the fridge, only keep colostrum for one week.** After that, quality declines. Be sure the refrigerator is cold (0-4 degree C) to reduce the onset of bacterial growth. Using a preservative, such as potassium sorbate, will stop bacterial growth and extend the length of time colostrum can be stored, up to seven days.
- 3. Keep frozen colostrum for six months or less.** While not everyone agrees on how long frozen colostrum can be stored without damage to the antibodies, most researchers agree the six-month mark is safe. If freezing colostrum, it is a good idea to use bags with a label of date and quality, that will stack neatly, and the increased surface area of the bag will rapidly cool and thaw the colostrum. Freezing will stop bacterial growth however it will not decrease the bacterial counts that are already present when put into the freezer.
- 4. Thaw frozen colostrum with warm water or a microwave.** The main concern regarding thawing frozen colostrum is to thaw the ice without degrading the immune proteins," Colostrum is best thawed with warm (not hot) water. Add more water to the bath as the frozen colostrum cools down the water. Alternately, colostrum can be thawed in a microwave oven with little damage to the Ig by microwaving the colostrum for short periods on a low power.
- 5. Cleanliness is key.** Whichever way you chose to store colostrum, the basic principles of cleanliness still apply. Milk cows and store colostrum in clean buckets. Transfer to single serve containers that you can write the date and quality on.

In conclusion, storing colostrum in the fridge or freezer provides you with flexibility to ensure that a newborn calf has high quality colostrum available within hours of birth. The refrigerator can store colostrum for a few days, while the freezer can effectively store colostrum up to six months. The advantages of storing colostrum in the refrigerator or freezer, or some combination of both is to ensure there is always colostrum available on your farm.