

CALF BLOAT TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

A Practical Checklist Before Jumping To Conclusions

Bloat is frustrating, but it is usually manageable. In most cases it is the result of multiple factors working together rather than simply the milk powder itself. Work through the checklist below before making major changes to your feeding programme.

1. How Many Calves Are Affected?

- Less than 10% of calves
- 10–25% of calves
- More than 25% of calves

Remember: If only a small percentage of calves are affected, consider calf-specific factors such as health status, colostrum intake, drinking behaviour, age, or disease challenge.

2. Simplify The Programme

- Remove non-essential additives temporarily
- Review probiotics, supplements and tonics
- Return to a simple, consistent milk feeding programme

Goal: Reduce variables and identify the true cause.

3. Check Feeding Concentration

Recommended Total Solids (TS):

Target	Total Solids
--------	--------------

Ideal	12–13%
-------	--------

Maximum	15%
---------	-----

- Review current mixing rate

- Check whether milk is being fed too concentrated
 - Increase water volume before reducing powder
-

4. Keep Nutrition Up

Do not immediately reduce powder intake.

Instead:

- ✓ Maintain the same daily grams of powder
- ✓ Increase water volume if concentration is too high

Example:

750g powder + 3L water = High concentration

750g powder + 6L total feed = Same nutrition, lower concentration

5. Check Mixing Accuracy

- Powder weighed accurately
 - Water volume measured accurately
 - Consistent recipe used by all staff
 - Feed temperature approximately 38–39°C
 - Brix refractometer checked (if available)
-

6. Inspect Feeding Equipment

- Teats checked for wear
 - Teats not allowing calves to drink too quickly
 - Feeders clean
 - Mixers operating correctly
 - Valves and lines functioning correctly
-

7. Review Hygiene & Water

- Feeders cleaned daily
 - Teats cleaned and replaced as required
 - Water troughs clean
 - Fresh drinking water always available
 - Bedding and calf environment clean and dry
-

8. Look For What Changed

- Weather
- New staff
- New additives
- Water source
- Bedding
- Calf source
- Disease challenge
- Feeding routine

Most digestive issues appear after something changes.

9. Seek Advice If Required

If calves are deteriorating, losses are occurring, or severe bloat is present, seek professional advice promptly.

Keep an open mind. Digestive issues are often complex and the first explanation offered is not always the correct one. Review the entire system before reaching conclusions.

Remember

Healthy calves are the goal.

Work through the system methodically, change one thing at a time, and focus on identifying the actual cause rather than the easiest cause to blame.

Milligans Feeds

www.milligansfeeds.co.nz

Milligans Feeds Ltd and its agents, suppliers and distributors make no representations or warranties of any kind as to the accuracy, adequacy, or completeness of any information and/or opinions contained in this document or that they are suitable for your intended use. This information is intended to provide general guidance to the you and/or the end customer. The information and/or opinions contained in this document may be changed at any time without notice. Please note that some products and applications may not be available and/or admissible.