

Educational Article – Faron Stubbert

COLOSTRUM - The liquid gold of life for your kid.

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Some pathogenic organisms can attack the newborn fast, resulting in early weakness and death. The more common ones of concern in goats are Tetanus, Clostridium Perfringens Type C & D, E.Coli, and several viral agents involved in kid scours. The newborn cannot be protected with vaccines because his immune system is not yet able to respond to challenge. He or she must get all their protection from the colostrum provided by the mother during the first few hours of life.

We can maximize the level of immunity in the colostrum by vaccinating the doe about 30 days prior to kidding. The immunoglobulins in the colostrum are very large protein molecules that normally can't be absorbed from the kid's gut in whole form. For a few hours after birth, however, the gut is more open and they can be absorbed directly into the blood stream, providing the necessary protection to the newborn.

Within a few hours this absorption starts to decrease and protection is minimized. That is why it is so important that kids receive colostrum as soon after birth as possible. If they do not, or we don't know the status of the colostrum nursing, it should be provided to them.

Note that colostrum has two functions: providing passive immunity and providing special rich nutrition to the newborn. While kitchen mixed recipes help with the nutrition component, they can never contain the immunity that mom puts in. Commercially available colostrum products are also inadequate and should be considered colostrum supplement, not colostrum substitutes. If you need to provide colostrum to a kid in trouble, the best source is colostrum from his mother or another recently fresh doe in your herd, but since that is not always possible, it is wise to maintain a supply of frozen colostrum.

When frozen it will keep well for at least a year, but always thaw and warm it in a bowl of warm water. Heating or microwaving denatures the protein, rendering it useless for disease protection. Colostrum can be collected for freezing from a doe that has lost her kid or from a doe that has an excess. The dose for a newborn is 1 fluid ounce (30 cc) per feeding, every 2 to 3 hours. Most ice trays hold about that much in each cube, so it works well to freeze colostrum in ice cube trays and pop out the cubes to store in resealable freezer bags. This allows just the right amount per feeding to be thawed and eliminates having to remember what the needed amount is (1 cube per feeding). [\(Note from Tri-R Ranch - We freeze about 10-16 oz of colostrum in a 20 oz plastic soda bottle. Each kid gets it's own bottle, when empty, that becomes his milk bottle.\)](#)

Newborns should get at least 10% of their weight in colostrum during the first 24 hours of life and the sooner they receive the initial portions, the better the absorption will be. For example an 8 lb kid should get at least 8 fluid ounces, or 1 cup, of colostrum.