Feeding waste milk to calves and antibiotic resistance

The Problem

Milk from cows treated with antibiotics cannot be sold for human consumption while residues from these drugs are present in the milk. Feeding ‘waste’ milk can be nutritious for calves and economical for farmers. However, feeding waste milk may contribute to antibiotic resistance in dairy calves.

Effects of different feeding practices

Resistance (measured as a zone of inhibited growth) of gut bacteria was monitored in calves fed waste milk varying in antibiotic concentrations (0, 6, 12.5, 25, and 50 µl / kg). These concentrations reflect those found in treated milk.

What this means

Avoid using milk from cows on the days they are treated with antibiotics. Pasteurizing milk fed to calves is also recommended as this improved milk quality and calf health. Pasteurization can also help reduce antibiotic resistance in calves.

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