



Torey Williams loves her calves.

Probiotics make the difference

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Rearing two young daughters and 500 calves a year pushed Torey Williams to a game-changing decision that put her on the path to rearing the best calves of her life.

Torey and husband Reece are contract milking 830 cows (in three herds) on 230 hectares for Mark and Leanne Miers at Reporoa. The couple milk all year around and while it spreads the calf rearing numbers, it also means the calves never completely go away.

They rear 200 replacements every year, along with 200 Friesian/Charolais calves (split between the spring and autumn), 15

Jersey bulls, and up to 100 Friesian bulls (reared to 100kg, depending on the season).

When Torey and Reece joined Mark and Leanne in 2018, their new employers recommended them including a powerful daily in-milk probiotic powder, Calf Xtreme, for the calves. Calf Xtreme includes micro-encapsulated probiotics, beneficial bacteria, digestive enzymes, and yeast – promoting immunity, recovery and digestion. At first Torey said she wondered if it was a “hippy” product, but she loved that their new owners were so proactive around animal welfare. She dutifully added one gram (per calf, per day) in her calves’ warm milk.

“We were feeding twice-a-day (TAD) at the time, because we’d always done it that

way,” Torey said. “With the probiotics in the milk, we started to notice the calves were ready for their milk in the morning, but they weren’t super interested in that afternoon feed.

“Their coats were shiny, they were putting on weight, they had clean bums and they were turning into barrels on legs – gaining between .5 and 1.5kg a day (across the three breeds).

“They loved their hay, they were eating their meal a lot faster, and chewing their cuds just like little cows. We also noticed when they went out to the paddock, they just smashed the pasture because their rumens were obviously so developed. That’s when we realised that the difference had to be Calf Xtreme.”

Torey said once their daughters, Olivia (now 2), and Molly (now 1) joined the mix, it became too much to ask them to be at the calf sheds for two hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon.

Probiotic Revolution's Matt Collier then suggested changing from feeding three litres of milk TAD to six litres OAD.

"We had seen the results of international studies where farmers were feeding their calves high rates of milk early on, which was proven to lay down the udder formation and contribute to higher future production," Matt said.

Torey said two "main drivers" for her to accept Matt's proposal was family time, and that the calves seemed to drink more aggressively in the morning anyway.

"Sometimes you think that people go to OAD just because they don't want to feed the calves in the afternoon. I just found on Calf Xtreme they were content, and not particularly interested in the afternoon feed," Torey said.

"You know on OAD if you have got an issue because everyone should be hungry in the morning. On TAD – even though you are watching your calves – sometimes they do get missed, and you can't always remember who has had a big drink and who hasn't. So, it really simplifies that part of my day."

She says she still goes down to the calf sheds in the afternoon. It just doesn't take as long.

With an average production in their milking herd of 500kg of milk solids/cow, Torey said she's also noticed the additional mass in their two-year-olds in the herd since introducing Calf Xtreme, which is giving them confidence amongst mixed aged cows.

"When our heifers calve down, you struggle to pick them in the herd because they are so big," Torey said. "We watch when we are drafting between herds and we often find that all the heifers go in the first herd, and they dominate. They will all be in the first row – they're the big dogs. I'm sure that early rumen development is the reason why."

She said Calf Xtreme has been an addition to their programme they won't changing anytime soon. "It's a quick and easy product to use too. A lot of people are conscious that when they want to add something to their calf rearing, they don't want to add time. This doesn't."



Left: Torey Williams (left) and Probiotic Revolution's Matt Collier survey this season's crop of calves. **Below:** Torey and her two daughters, Olivia (now 2), and Molly (now 1).

