



Calf Rearing Fact Sheet: Getting started

Calf collection

Key Points

1. Farm staff must know pick up plan and calf ID system to be used. Plan ahead.
2. Collect calves at least once a day to reduce bonding time with the cow. Ideally collect calves twice per day.
3. Get the calf to a warm dry environment as soon as possible.
4. Treat calf navel with iodine spray before transporting and again at shed.
5. Trailer must be clean and dry. Sunshine is a good steriliser.
6. Don't overcrowd trailers - provide shelter and drive slowly.
7. Treat NEWBORNS with care.
8. All newborns must receive 12% of their bodyweight in fresh warm colostrum within 12 hours of birth.



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Calf Collection

- Make sure the calf pick up plan is understood by all staff.
- The calf identification and tagging system needs to be understood by all involved.
- Collect calves at least twice each day, more often if practical. The aim is to collect as soon as possible after birth. This reduces the bonding time between cow and calf, enables the cow to get on with eating and producing milk and reduces the risk of metabolic disorders.
- Calf requirements for colostrum are met in your rearing facility.
- Collection soon after birth reduces the time calves have to suckle and lessens the chance of the cow contracting mastitis.
- Aim is to get the calf to a dry warm environment as soon as possible and feed a known quantity of fresh high quality colostrum.
- Spray navel with 7% iodine solution before transporting and again in shed. Cover the navel completely with the spray solution.

Calf Trailer

- Needs to be CLEAN and DRY and protected from wind and rain. A deep bed of dry clean straw works well. Clean rubber mats are OK as long as it is not too wet and cold.
- Always place calves gently in the calf trailer. They are NEWLBORN.
- Calf trailers are a major source of bugs. They must be kept clean and dry.
- DO NOT place too many calves in the trailer. Drive slowly.
- Calves standing all over each other is not acceptable.
- Clean and dry trailer daily, ideally using sunshine to disinfect.

Arrival at the shed

- Feed 12% of bodyweight of high quality fresh colostrum to all calves within 12 hours of birth. To be sure all calves get colostrum it is often easier to tube all calves with 2-4 litres of first milking warm colostrum.
- Don't assume a calf has had sufficient colostrum from its mother.
- A 30 kg calf requires 3.5 litres of colostrum within 12 hours of birth.
- First milking colostrum has more antibodies (immunoglobulins), fat, protein, minerals and vitamins than transition milk.
- Antibodies in colostrum are only absorbed for the first 24 hours of a calf's life. Ideally give two feeds of first milk colostrum within the first 12 hours of life.
- Calves that are weak or cold require extra attention. Use a heat lamp box and tube feed with warm, good quality colostrum.