



GUIDE TO REARING YOUR Calf

Selection of the Calf

Calves are best sourced from a local farmer. So buy a healthy calf that is at least 4 days old, that has been well fed on colostrum. Look for small dry navels, pricked up ears, firm faeces, clear bright eyes, moist noses, shiny coats (breed dependant), firm teeth and playful movements.

If possible, avoid purchasing calves from the sale as they will have been exposed to numerous bugs and viruses. Calves purchased at the sales should be checked over particularly well.

If a bull calf is chosen he should be castrated with a rubber ring within the first 3 weeks to become a steer, otherwise he may become aggressive as he reaches maturity. Ensure both testicles are down before releasing the ring.

Basic rearing needs

- Two to three bags of (10kg) milk powder
- Calf teats are available that attach to a coke bottle, or alternatively a complete re-usable bottle and teat or calf feeder that hangs on a fence can be purchased
- Pellets or meal from 1 week
- Halter, Lead, Brush & Cover
- Drench & Vaccine

Most of these products are available from your local Franklin Vets clinic.



Feeding

Purchase a calf milk powder from reputable supplier that will meet the needs of your calf. It is better to avoid the cheaper brands as they can potentially provide fewer nutrients and affect the growth of your calf. Mixing and feeding instructions are clearly written on the bags.

Once your calf is drinking well, feed at the upper limits of the recommendation so it grows well. For best results, milk

feed your calf twice a day until Ag day. Supplement the milk with a high quality calf meal from a young age to encourage rumen development. Chaffage or hay can also be offered and don't forget to ensure your calf has access to fresh and clean water every day. Allow to graze on reasonably long grass everyday once it is over two weeks of age.

Scours – prevention and treatment

Prevention

- Ensure the calf has had 2 litres of colostrum within 6 hours of birth.
- Minimise stress and chilling during sale and transport.
- House in a dry, draft free, hygienic shed.
- Avoid sudden changes in the type, quantity or temperature of milk or milk powder.
- After significant transport feed electrolytes for the first 12 hours.

Treatment

- Keep it in a clean, dry, draught free environment and keep warm (put a calf cover on if available).
- Alternate feeding between 2 litres milk and 2 litres of good quality electrolyte such as Revive or Diarrest® using protocol below.
- Use a tube feeder for any slow or weak drinkers.

- Veterinarian attention should be sought for any calf which is weak, cold in the ears and limbs or unable to stand.
- All scouring animals should be kept separate from healthy animals until they have recovered.
- Spray the pens and equipment with virucidal spray daily (eg Vetsan).

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Morning	Electrolyte, 2L	Electrolyte, 2L	Milk, 2L
Lunch	Electrolyte, 2L	Milk, 2L	Electrolyte, 2L
Evening	Milk, 2L	Electrolyte, 2L	Milk, 2L
Overnight	Leave 3L electrolyte in feeder overnight		

*Download our [treating scours in calves](#) guide.



Vaccination and Drenching

Your calf should be vaccinated with a 5 in 1 vaccine at six weeks of age at the latest and then given a booster shot 4 weeks later. This vaccine prevents pulpy kidney disease, tetanus, black disease, malignant oedema and blackleg.

Drench for worms from 6-8 weeks old, unless otherwise advised by your vet.

Lice Control

Lice are a common problem. These can be controlled either using pour-on or injectable drenches. This should be combined with brushing the lice eggs from the coat, washing the calf's cover and keeping infected calves and gear away from other calves. Please ask your vet for advice on which option is best for your pet.

Housing Requirements

A good clean, dry and draught free environment is required for optimum health. A cover, even used only at night will assist in your calf's growth as it will not be using its energy resources to keep warm.

Daily Care Requirements

- Regular feeding (twice daily for best growth).
- Wash its face to remove any milk residue.
- Walk it on a halter and lead and spend time with it.
- Brush it a least once a day.

Ear tag requirements

Cattle MUST be tagged with NAIT approved RFID tags within six months of birth, or before they move off-farm – whichever is soonest. NAIT tags are the only tags required by law. Animal Health Board (AHB) approved tags are no longer compulsory. Remember to register your animals after they've been tagged.



If you have any concerns about your calf's health, please don't hesitate to contact your local Franklin Vets Clinic. We are happy to give advice over the phone on whether the animal requires treatment.

Debudding

Certain cattle breeds will grow horns. These are best removed when the calf is young. Franklin Vets will come to your home and debud your calf using sedation and pain relief and an electric iron to burn off the horn stubs, ideally at 2-6 weeks of age. This is humane, quick and effective.

Points to remember

1. Ensure long hair at the end of its tail is kept clean, never cut your calves tail.
2. Do not clip or shave your calf – a clipped calf is disqualified from Ag Day competitions.
3. Brush your calf often to get a nice shiny finish on the coat and remove loose hair
4. Ensure the halter is loosened regularly or removed so it is not too tight otherwise it will wear the hair off around its neck.

Tips for Success

1. The child should always feed the calf, mum or dad can assist younger children if needed.
2. Give your calf a treat when leading and calling. Use the pellets or they like bread (save the crusts and stale bread). Even a hug, pat and a few kind words are beneficial.
3. Spend lots of time with your calf so you build a bond.
4. Set a course up at home and walk your calf daily. Give your calf a rest day before any show so she is not too tired.
5. When leading, the right hand should grip the lead, palm upwards and be 15cms from the halter. The left hand should grip the lead, knuckles upwards. Stand beside the left shoulder of the calf at all times. Try to keep the calf moving at a reasonable pace, but you should walk at the same pace as your calf.
6. Wash your calf the day before Ag day (so the coat & oils have time to come out for the best shine). Take a bucket, brushes, an old towel to clean it if it is dirty when you arrive. Also take its food and water requirements for the day.

**Updated Aug 25*