

Care of the Calf before Transport or Sale

Summary

Calves that are well cared for prior to transport or sale are more valuable to potential buyers. They will also cope better with movement to their rearing farm and will be 'fit for purpose' on arrival.

Background

The number of calves born on dairy farms has increased by over 300,000 (approximately 30%) over the past ten years. At the same time, dairy farms have become more specialised with more calves than ever leaving their farm of birth. Increasingly, these calves are being transported and sold at younger ages.

All of these factors suggest that could be the potential for calf health/ welfare issues on dairy farms and associated with the transport and sale of dairy calves during their early weeks of life. Consequently, dairy farmers and others need to be pro-active in managing the health/ welfare of all calves, including those for transport or sale.

Responsibilities

Dairy farmers have a responsibility for the health/ welfare of all calves born on their farms, and to ensure that all calves due to leave the farm are 'fit for transport or sale' and will cope well with the journey. Others, including buying / selling agents, animal handlers, transporters and managers of facilities, also have a shared responsibility to ensure that illness or injury of dairy calves is avoided while these animals are under their supervision during the selling process.

Criteria to be met

The following eight criteria must be met before calves leave the dairy farm for transport or sale.

1. Calves must be fit for transport or sale.
 - Calves must be in good health, alert and able to rise from a lying position.
2. All calves should receive three litres of colostrum (1st milk) within two hours of birth (Colostrum 1, 2, 3 rule).
 - Calves should be offered 5 litres of milk or milk replacer in the first week and 6 litres thereafter.
 - Calves should have access to clean water and a source of roughage (straw) from 4/ 5 days of age.

3. Calves should be fed on the morning of transport or sale.
 - Calves should receive three litres of milk or milk replacer on the morning of movement, ideally as near as possible to the time of transport.
4. Calves should be greater than ten days of age if they are to be transported greater than 100km.
 - In all cases, calves should have a completely healed (dry and withered) navel.
5. Calves should be free from all obvious signs of disease (including scour, pneumonia) and injury.
 - Calves must display signs of good health – bright, playful, curious, keen to drink milk, clear eyes and nose, no cough.
6. Prior to movement, all calves should be provided with appropriate accommodation to maximise calf health and welfare and minimise the risk of disease.
 - Clean, deep and dry bedding is essential to keep the calf warm and comfortable.
 - Avoid overcrowding by allowing 1.5 m² per calf.
 - Ensure that all housing and feeding equipment is clean.
7. Calves must be correctly tagged and accompanied by the correct identification documents.
8. Calves must be handled appropriately during loading and unloading, and should be transported for the minimum time possible.
 - Suitable bedding e.g. straw should be added to vehicle floors to assist absorption of urine and faeces, to minimise slipping and protect animals from hard surfaces.

If there is any doubt about the suitability of the calf for sale or transport, then it should not leave the dairy farm.

- It is always best to wait until the calf meets the above criteria.
- Any health issues must be addressed before transport or sale.

Fit for Transport or Sale

Colostrum 123



1. **1st** milking only

2. Feed within **2** hours of birth

3. Feed **3** litres

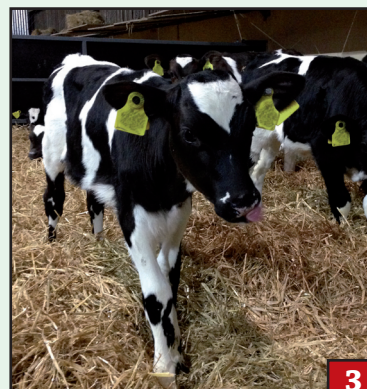


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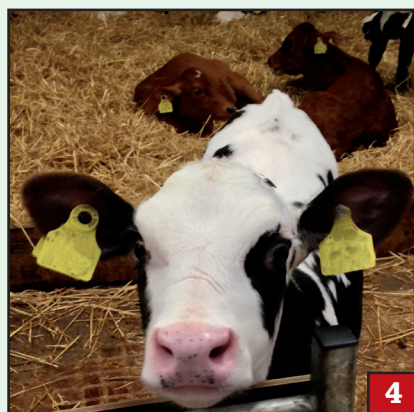
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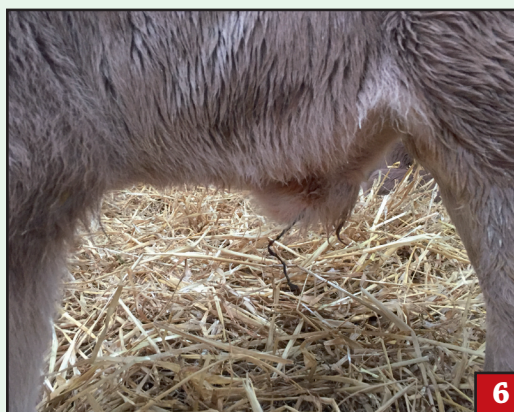
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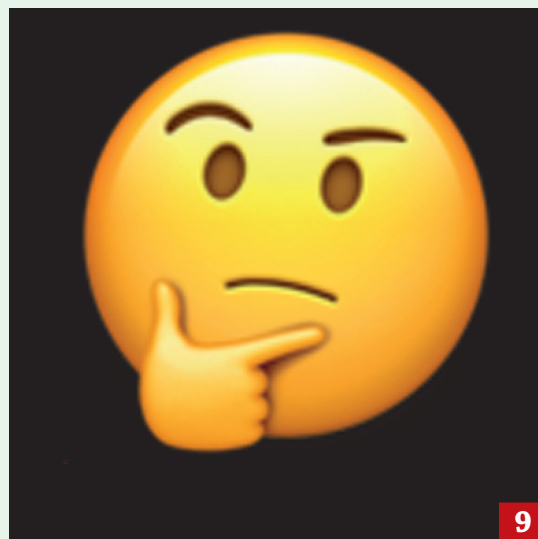
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1. Colostrum 1, 2, 3
2. Appropriate accommodation (clean, deep and dry bedding)
3. Eyes bright/ alert
4. Clear eyes/ nose

5. Correct identification
6. Dry navel
7. No scours
8. Feed on morning of transport or sale
9. If in doubt, delay movement