



# TOP TIPS FOR YOUNGSTOCK NUTRITION 3

Good calf nutrition is essential for long term productivity, performance and return on investment. During the first few weeks of the calf's life, its ability to convert feed into growth is highly efficient, but this decreases over time.

Following some of the guidelines below and talking with your nutritionist can help you improve the nutrition your youngstock receive.

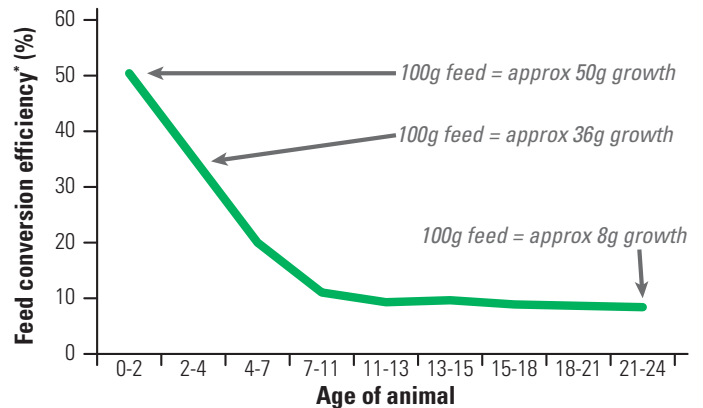
## COLOSTRUM

- Ensuring calves receive adequate colostrum can be a challenge but sticking to the 5 Qs (Quantity, Quality, Quickly, sQueaky clean and Quantify) can help to make sure your youngstock get the best possible start. For more information about colostrum feeding and management, please refer to our Practical Colostrum Management leaflet.



## WATER

- Water is required to stop dehydration, promote good rumen development and dry feed intake; it should be provided from birth and replaced daily in clean water buckets.
- Water should be given alongside the normal milk feed; quantities should be increased on warmer days to prevent dehydration.



\*Bodyweight gain divided by amount of feed consumed.

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## FEEDING MILK

- Whole milk can produce good results if fed correctly but there are high variations of nutritional content, increased risk of bacterial contamination and disease spread vs. milk replacer. You should consider using a pasteuriser if feeding whole milk.
- Calf milk replacers are a very effective way to feed your calves as they are highly palatable and specially designed to provide quality nutrients.
- Do not switch between milk, milk replacer and different milk replacer specifications to minimise stress and help maintain a healthy appetite.
- Teat feeding is more natural than bucket feeding and encourages the formation of the oesophageal groove; enabling more efficient digestion for the calf.
- Calves should be fed at the same time each day.
- Milk should be fed at the calf's body temperature (38°C).
- Always follow guidelines and mixing instructions for your chosen milk replacer to ensure the best results for your calves.
- Make sure to feed enough; research shows many dairy calves are chronically underfed. The minimum volume is 15% bodyweight daily. The volume and energy requirements will need to increase as the calf grows.
- More milk will be required on cold days to help the calf maintain its body temperature. For each 5°C drop below 15°C, feed calves (under 3 weeks old) an extra 50g of milk replacer or 0.33L of whole milk daily.



## FEEDING SOLIDS

- ◆ Provide a small amount of starter feed and quality straw from birth to comfortably transition your calves onto solids; this should be replaced daily.
- ◆ Feed should be palatable to encourage eating. Dusty feed can cause respiratory problems and should be avoided.
- ◆ Calves eat only small amounts in the first few days but intake begins to increase measurably after 2 weeks.
- ◆ Before weaning you must be sure the calf will eat independently, enabling further growth and survival. Signs of this include cudding and increased appetite which will occur around 6-8 weeks in most calves.
- ◆ It is important to gradually reduce the quantities of milk you are feeding as this will reduce the stress which comes with abruptly ending milk feeding.
- ◆ In order to prevent weight loss and reduced development during weaning do not change social groups, housing and feed all at once.
- ◆ Offer plenty of roughage/fibre particularly around times of stress as this will help to protect against reduced intakes.

## HYGIENE

- ◆ Sick calves are less likely to feed, therefore their growth and productivity will decline.
- ◆ Feeding and water buckets, bottles, teats, footwear and other feeding equipment are regularly and correctly washed, disinfected and dried to prevent the growth and spread of disease-causing bacteria.

## MEASURING

- ◆ Keeping records of your calves' weight over time, as well as the volume and frequency of their intake will help to improve feed efficiency, reduce costs and maximise productivity.
- ◆ To get the most reliable results, use the same scales, hip stick or calf weight tapes to ensure consistency.
- ◆ Measuring your calf's weight at birth, weaning, 12 weeks and 4-6 months of age, and analysing the results will help you to benchmark your progress against growth targets and to calculate your return on investment.

Feeding quantities of both milk and solids should change dependent on calf weight, environmental conditions and targeted growth rates. Speak to your nutritionist to help you to set up a plan to maximise your herd's nutritional efficiency to achieve targeted growth rates.

Further information and tips for calf nutrition management can be found at [www.lifestartscience.com](http://www.lifestartscience.com)



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