

## **Some extra information to help with caring for your calf - to be read in conjunction with the official CALF BOOKLET**

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Before approaching a farmer; who may be your parent, friend, neighbour, you need to check you have a few essential things.

Calves need safe, well fenced paddocks with shelter from extreme heat or cold, and clean water in a low trough which the calf can reach easily. A shelter, shed or barn is a good idea to keep your calf out of the wind and rain, especially at night.

Calves need good quality, fresh, long grass as (when they are very young) they tend to nibble at the tips of the grass. A good supply of hay is necessary for your calf to sleep and rest in.

It is also a good idea to have a cover. A cover for the calf can be easily made from a clean sack. It keeps the calf warm and helps to loosen and remove winter hair, keeping the calf's coat fine.

### **To be eligible to enter calves must be born between 20 July and 25 September.**

Please note that parents also need to refer to the “**Official Guidelines**” in CALF BOOKLET which is based on the Constitution.

**GROOMING** - Regular brushing maintains a clean coat and healthy skin. You can start when it is a couple of days old using a pet brush or cheap hair brush. Please don't pluck or trim your calf. Once or twice before competition day, a wash in fine, calm weather could be a good idea. Use lukewarm water with a bit of milk soap or shampoo to wash your calf and then rinse with clean water. In a sheltered, sunny spot, rub dry with a cloth or towel and brush the coat to restore the hair to its correct direction and remember to re-cover the calf before night time. Spot cleaning around the rear of your calf may also be a good idea.

**FEEDING** - Use a milk feeder for your calf – preferably a bottle which allows you to feed the calf on its own so you develop a friendship with it. Right from the start, your calf will need feeding twice a day - in the morning (before you leave for school) and the afternoon (when you get home).

If you're lucky enough to live on a dairy farm, you will probably get your milk direct from the farm dairy in the mornings and afternoons, when it is still warm so you can immediately feed your calf. If you don't live on a dairy farm, you can mix special calf milk formula with warm water (the water-powder ratio is given on the outside of the bag of milk powder) and feed your calf. You can purchase milk powder and bottles from stores like RD1 and Farmlands.

It is very important to keep whatever utensil you use to feed your calf (bottle) very, very clean – calves can get 'a tummy bug' called scours (diarrhoea!!!) from dirty feeding utensils, so be very careful to clean everything in hot soapy water after each feed so it is clean for the next feed.

**CALF MEAL** - Your calf will grow quickly and will soon begin nibbling grass and drinking water from the trough. At around two weeks you will want to introduce calf meal to its diet so it grows well and has 'good condition' (has a good cover of fat and muscle) and is contented during the day between feeds.

Meal is fed in the mornings, after your calf's milk feed. You will need a large, flat-bottomed feeder which your calf can't push around the paddock. Although the supply of grass, hay and meal increases as your calf grows, it is still important to keep feeding milk as this ensures your calf will have a 'bloom' (shine) on its coat when it competes at Lamb, Calf, and Chicken Day. You can purchase calf meal from stores like RD1 and Farmlands.

**WEANING** - At around two to three weeks, and after checking with your farmer, the calf's twice daily milk feeds can be reduced to one – generally in the morning. The amount of milk generally increases so your calf is getting one larger drink of milk each day. Calves generally remain on once a day milk feeds with grain until after Calf Club. Weaning then takes place when the calf returns to the farm.

### **HALTERS**

- Calf halters can be purchased from your local farming store; they are made of soft leather and can be adjusted so they fit very small, and quite large, calves. Or a simple halter suitable for the training period and the show may be made out of a piece of soft rope. See Calf Booklet.
- Halters should be fitted for around one hour each day of the calf's life with you – leaving it on for longer would rub hair off. As soon as possible after your calf arrives, fit the halter with help from the farmer, Mum or Dad.
- When fitted correctly, you should be able to fit two fingers between any part of the halter and your calf's skin, and it should not pull off if the calf pulls back.

Try to make time to look after your calf before and after school each day. Try to allow around 30 minutes each morning, and again in the afternoon to care for your calf. Remember this is your responsibility, not Mum or Dad's. Your calf is going to rely on you, so you have to be there, every day, caring for it. It's a big responsibility and you want to be sure you can do it for 6 to 12 weeks.

