



SAC Dairy Research Centre Farm Notes

Calf Rearing

New-born calves are kept with their dam for 24 hours. During this time they are fed 2 litres of pooled colostrum by stomach tube, to ensure that they have received and absorbed important antibodies, which will help them develop disease immunity.

Until about 5 to 7 days of age they are individually penned, in sight of other calves, and are fed pooled milk containing Rotavirus antibodies (from immunised cows) by teat feeders. Training the calves to drink from a teat means that once they move into group pens, they can be easily fed their milk by an automatic feeder. This happens when calves reach around 7 days of age. The group pens are straw bedded and calves have free access to dry concentrate feed, straw and fresh water.

Automatic milk dispenser

Calves wear a collar with a transponder to identify them and to allow the machine to allocate their milk into meals over the course of the day. The machine contains milk replacer powder and mixes each meal so that it arrives at the feeding teat at the correct temperature.

Calves of all ages have unlimited access to fresh water.

Youngstock

All calves are weaned at between 6 and 7 weeks of age. Their feed then consists of grass silage, concentrate and straw. The aim is that they will grow to a target weight of 350kg by 15 months old, when they can be served, to calve at 2 years. The average target growth rate is therefore around 0.75kg/day.