



## Calf Rearing Fact Sheet: Getting started

# Equipment

### Key Points

1. All aspects of the operation from calf pick up to water in paddocks after weaning require attention to detail.
2. Cleanliness is a must.
3. Sharp edges in any equipment can damage calves and people.
4. Check teats in feeders and replace faulty teats. Provide plenty of meal—and keep it fresh and clean.
5. Sunshine is a powerful sterilising agent.
6. Wash and drain feeders between feeds.



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### General

- Site the operation in a sunny well drained area. Be prepared to put shingle down in areas where vehicles travel—mud will increase the likelihood of disease.
- Dirty equipment leads to disease and sickness. That is an animal welfare issue and a bottom line loss to the enterprise.
- After washing, drain equipment to allow it to dry. Sunshine sterilizes.
- Repair broken equipment—damaged items may cause injury.

### Calf trailers

- Shelter from cold wind and rain on the journey to the calf shed is critical to ensure that calves do not arrive weakened and susceptible to disease.
- Clean trailers after each use and leave to dry in sun.

### Milk feeders

- Use compartment feeders if feeding a restricted volume of milk. This means you can check that every calf gets its full milk ration.
- Replace leaky teats or teats that flow too fast/too slow.
- There should be adequate room in each pen for each calf to feed comfortably off the feeder.
- Feeders should be placed such that calf necks are stretched out long and low.

### Meal feeders

- Trough like feeders allow easy access to birds and rodents but calves have good access as well. Allow 35 cm of trough length for each calf. Troughs should be off the ground and protected from the weather.
- Meal bins can have plastic strips that hang down to deter birds. Start calves with strips tied up and release once calves are used to feeding (next page).

### Water troughs

- Protect ball cocks so that calves cannot play and cause flooding.
- Clean out regularly.
- Small bowls are good so that water remains clean by frequent refilling.
- A perimeter guard around a water trough can prevent fouling (next page).
- Never use teats for providing water to calves as water will then go straight to the abomasum rather than the rumen.





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