



# Calf Response System



## LIFETIME CALF RESPONSE SYSTEM CHECKLIST

It has long been acknowledged that the young calf is the future of the dairy herd and that these animals are generally the highest genetic merit animals on the dairy farm, capable of higher milk yields and greater longevity. It should stand to reason that we nurture the young calf to help it achieve its full potential. A calf that has been reared to its potential should be ready to calve down at around 24 months!

The future of the dairy cow is dictated by what and how much it eats as a calf and as such a calf fed and reared correctly from birth will:

- **Become a stronger and more durable cow**
- **Enter the milking herd sooner**
- **Have higher lifetime production**

*Understanding how important young stock rearing is to the future profitability of the dairy herd, GLW Feeds Limited has published this calf rearing checklist. This contains essential information to ensure you give your young stock the best possible start to life.*



## TRANSITION COW

**Healthy calves are born from healthy cows and therefore a good transition period will result in giving the calf the best possible start.**

- Ideally cows **3 weeks before calving** should be of **BCS 2.5-3.0**.
- Cows should be **housed separately** from the rest of the herd in a **clean, dry environment**.
- Feed a suitable **transition diet** to allow for a trouble free calving.



## COLOSTRUM

**Once the calf is born, it is vital to turn your attention to good colostrum management.**

- Take the freshly calved cow to the parlour and **harvest colostrum as soon as possible**. (Ensure the cow's udder and equipment used are clean)
- Remove the newborn calf from the calving pen, provide it with its own **clean, dry accommodation** and **dip navel with 7% iodine**.
- Feed the calf with **3 litres** (2 litres for Jersey) of the **mother's (39°C) colostrum**.
- Feed by **bottle with a teat** or an oesophageal tube feeder (care must be taken in doing this to avoid aspiration into the lungs).
- It is best to **avoid letting the calf suckle** its mother.
- Check the **colostrum quality** with a colostrometer (sample at 21°C) before feeding.
- It is best to achieve this **within the first 6 hours** of life but the sooner the better!
- A **second feed** of 2/3 litres of the mother's colostrum must be fed **within 12-18 hours** of birth.
- Colostrum that has not been used must be **refrigerated** to stop bacteria multiplying.

## FEEDING

- Calves require a **good feeding routine**, ideally carried out by the same person each day.
- Feed calves a **good quality milk replacer** (see information on GLW Lifetime Calf Milk Replacers) or whole milk (preferably pasteurised).
- Calves must be fed **consistently, cleanly** and in a good **well ventilated environment**.

To achieve optimum results, it is recommended to feed a 17% oil and 26% protein replacer. Mix at the rate of 150g of powder to make 1 litre of mixed milk replacer; i.e. add 600g powder to 3.4 litres (45° C) to make 4 litres.) Begin by feeding (39-40° C) 4 litres per day\* and then slowly increase the volume e.g. 750g + 4.25 litres water until the calf is consuming 6 litres/d (900g powder + 5.1 litres water) by 20 days of age. Continue at this level until 6 weeks of age. From 6 weeks, slowly decrease the litres of milk until the calf is fully weaned at 9/10 weeks of age. The calf should be consuming at least 2 kg of concentrates/day at weaning.

- **During periods of cold weather increase powder intake** by 100g/calf/day.
- The same volumes, temperatures and timings can be applied when feeding whole milk.

**These recommendations are targeted to ensure that the calf can grow at 800g/d**

\*depending on calf weight. Young calves (less than 30 days) may benefit from 3x day feeding.

The table shows the differences in growth rates and age at 1st calving by ensuring that optimum nutrition is provided to the calf.

Growth Rate	Low	Normal	MP Std	MP Max
Avg growth week 1-9 (g/d)	520	620	750	825
Weight after 9 weeks (kg)	78	84	92	97
Avg growth 1st 3 months (g/d)	600	700	800	900
Weight after 3 months (kg)	94	103	113	120
Difference	-8%		10%	17%
Age at insemination (mth)	17	15	14	13
Age at first calving (mth)	27	25	24	23

### In order to achieve these targets:

- Metabolic Programming (MP) should be adopted as your future cows are influenced by what and how much you feed them as calves.
- Extra growth in the first 2-3 months is due to feed conversion rates being far greater in pre-weaned calves.
- A strong healthy calf with good rumen development leads to strong durable cows with a greater lifetime production.

## The positive response

**GLW Feeds - where you'll get a positive response from our feed, our service and our people.**



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