

Feeding the Dairy Calf

Skim Milk, Supplemented by Grain and Roughage. Will Keep Her Thrifty

Whole milk is the natural food for the calf, but butter fat at 50 cents a pound is too expensive for the purpose. It has moreover been found unnecessary. There are many substitutes that can be worked into the dairy calf's ration as soon as the digestive apparatus is off to a good start and is capable of handling them. The best dairy cows in the world have not tasted whole milk since they were a few weeks of age.

The calf should get the first milk or colostrum of the cow. This has special properties designed by nature to suit the requirements of the new born calf. It has a purgative effect and starts the organs off properly. The practice generally followed on the best dairy farms is to let the calf suck for the first day or two. It is then weaned from the cow and taught to drink. The old fashioned method of teaching the calf to drink by letting it suck the fingers has never been improved upon. One of the dangers to be avoided is giving the calf too much. Its ration of milk should be carefully measured and it should receive about one pound for every eight pounds in weight. Calves of the largest dairy breeds weigh from 70 pounds to 90 pounds at birth so that they should rarely be fed more than from 10 to 12 pounds a day of whole milk.

From Whole to Skim Milk

For the first couple of weeks the calf should receive a full ration of whole milk. This can then be gradually substituted by adding skimmed milk until at four or five weeks of age no whole milk is given. The skimmed milk ration can be gradually increased with the weight of the calf, though it is rarely necessary to give more than from 15 to 18 pounds a day if other suitable feeds are given. The milk should always be sweet and clean and preferably warm. Milk from the separator and that has not lost its natural heat is best. As skimmed milk is one of the most economical of foods it can be kept on until the calf is five or six months of age or older. The following table given by the Illinois Experimental Station shows the pounds per day to be given to calves of the larger dairy breeds:

Suggested Calf Feeding Schedule, Using Whole and Skim Milk

Days of Age	Whole Milk	Skim Milk
1	With dam	
2	5 to 6	
3 to 28	10 to 12	
28 to 35	5 to 6	5 to 6
35 to 56		10 to 12
56 to 91		12

A calf will begin to take grain in addition to milk at a very early age. At two or three weeks most of them will begin to take a little if it is sprinkled in the pail after the milk has been drunk. At first they prefer soft feed such as bran, oats and oil meal. When older, oats will usually be taken readily. A mixture recommended by the Illinois Experimental Station is as follows: Ground corn, 10 parts by weight; oats, 50 parts; wheat bran, 30 parts; and oil meal, 10 parts. The feeds may, if preferred, be mixed in equal parts by weight. This is for the young calf. The grain ration should be gradually increased. Good growing calves will consume two or three

pounds of grain daily when fed twice at two or three months of age.

All the Clover They will Eat

A little hay may be given as soon as the calf will begin nibbling at it, which may be when it is only a few days old, but it will not consume it to any extent until it is about four weeks old. A good grade of clover makes an excellent hay for calves. Alfalfa has a laxative effect, although this will not be serious if other suitable foods are being used. Legume hay makes the best roughage for feeding calves in winter because it is relished by the calves and contains the elements most necessary to growth and development. A fine grade of legume hay such as clover or alfalfa should be kept in the manger or rack so that the calf can have access to it at all times. It will usually take off the leaves or tender parts and the coarser portions may then be fed to older cattle. At two months of age the calf will begin eating silage, and this, if it is available, may be introduced into the ration at feeding. It is important, however, that the silage be of good quality. After one month of age the calf should be supplied liberally with good water. In winter it is best to have this warm. Salt should also be furnished after the calf reaches the age of two or three months. It may be sprinkled in small amounts into the empty manger or placed in a box provided for the purpose.



DAIRY PROMISE

Keep the Dairy Heifer Growing

Dairy animals should be kept constantly gaining from birth to maturity. For this reason it is necessary to continue proper feeding after the milk feeding period is passed. Frequently they are neglected at this stage. If on pasture, care should be taken that this does not become dried up so that not enough feed is available. It is essential that a grain trough be provided in the summer lots for heifers under one year of age. The amount of grain fed in addition to pasture in summer or other feeds in winter should be sufficient to keep the animals in a good growing condition. The dairy heifer is delicately balanced. She does not recover readily from checks in her development. Such checks will impair her future efficiency as a milk producer. Full bodily development is necessary for the heavy strain she has to bear when coming to the age of production. To secure this it is not necessary to keep her in high flesh. In fact a tendency toward fineness should be strictly guarded against. The dairy cow's function is to put the results of her feeding in the milk pail and not on her back. In her growing period her feeding should be so conducted as to bring about the fullest possible physical development without making her too fat.

Calf Quarters

The calf should have dry, well-lighted quarters, preferably with a southern exposure. The fewer doors a calf barn has the more effectively can cold be excluded in winter. A rack or manger from which hay may be eaten at will should be provided. Stanchions for fastening the animals at feeding time are desirable. If the calves are stanchioned while they are being fed milk and are given grain before being turned loose, there is not so much tendency for them to suck one another.



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