

FARMER GUIDE

HOUSING FOR YOUNG CALVES



Location MATTERS

All too often young calves are housed somewhere that is just either convenient for feeding, or unsuitable for larger cattle rather than in a facility designed for their specific needs. In this farmer guide we will discuss the particular needs of young calves.

- Calves should be protected from draughts by solid barriers that extend to the level of the floor so they can shelter
- In exposed buildings consider creating protected areas for young calves

Wind speed MATTERS

- Calves are very susceptible to the chilling effects of draughts
- Even very mild draughts of a few miles an hour will chill calves, reducing feed conversion efficiency and increasing susceptibility to disease
 - A 5mph draught will reduce the 'effective' temperature by 8°C



DANGER SIGNS

- On a breezy day check whether a lighter flame will flicker in the lying area of your calf pens
- Do calves huddle in a particular area of the pen?
- High feeding level with poor growth rates



Fresh air **MATTERS**

- Stale, stagnant air that is contaminated with dust, moisture, ammonia and viruses that can cause pneumonia needs to be removed and replaced by fresh air
- Unfortunately young calves often do not generate sufficient heat to drive the stack effect
- Ventilating calf buildings with fans, if designed and sited appropriately can ensure a ready supply of fresh air

DANGER SIGNS

- Smell of ammonia in a shed
- Dark, poorly lit areas of a shed
- High incidence of calf pneumonia

Moisture **MATTERS**

- High moisture levels in calf sheds promote the survival of harmful bacteria and viruses
- Damp sheds are also colder than dry ones
- Prevent moisture entering from outside the building
- Promote the removal of moisture generated from inside the building
 - Create good drainage
 - Use plenty of absorbent bedding
 - Sweep or scrape pooled moisture from a building

DANGER SIGNS

- Wet floors
- Sweat and dirt on coats
- Condensation on underside of roof

